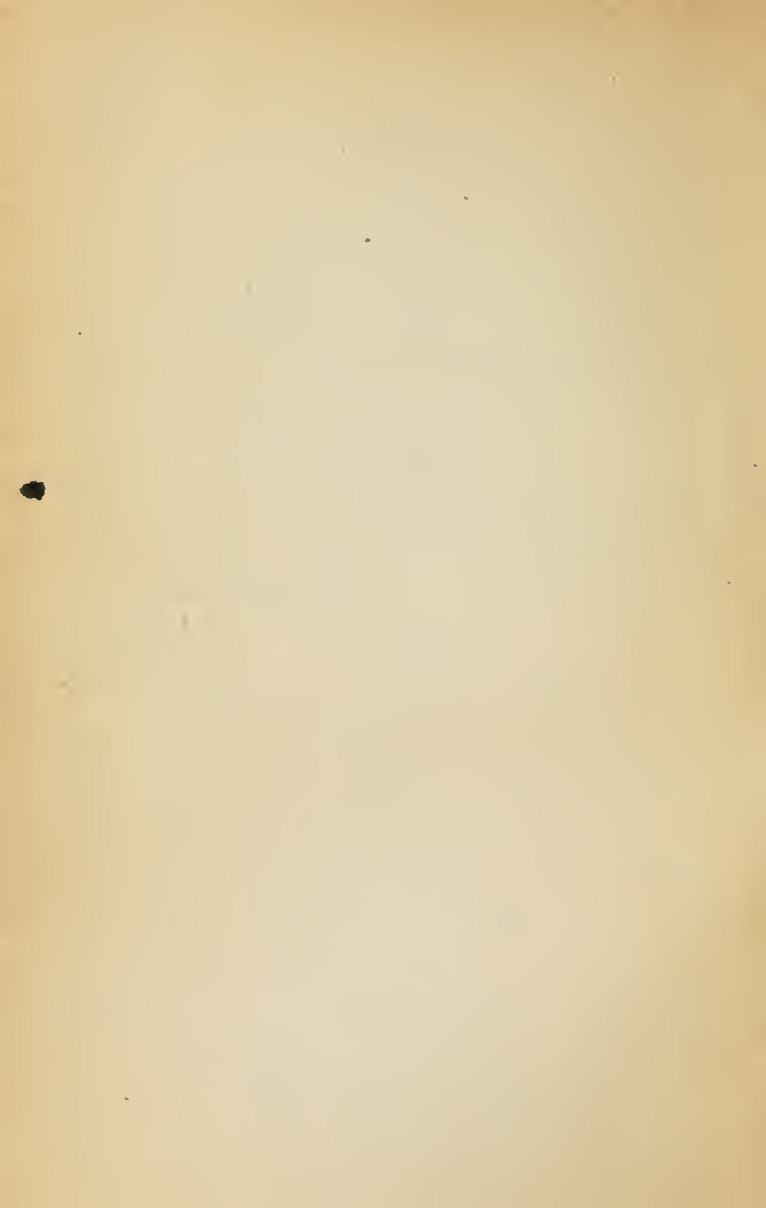

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"I'LL PAY HER UP!"

(Page 204.)

ROXY.

BY

EDWARD EGGLESTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE HOOSIER SCHOOLMASTER," "THE CIRCUIT RIDER," ETC., ETC.

Enthousiasme, état momentané, mouvement extraordinaire d'esprit, causé presque toujours par une cause extérieure. *Exaltation*, état habituel, élévation constant que l'âme doit à ses propres forces, que est dans sa propre nature.

GUIZOT, *Dictionnaire des Synonymes.*

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ROXY.

CHAPTER I.

THE BARBECUE.

You would have known that it was a holiday in the county-seat village of Luzerne, had you fallen in with a party of country boys dressed in white cotton shirts and trousers of blue jeans, who hurried along the road at sun rise, to the summit of the hill that overlooks the town. You might have guessed that it was an occasion of merry-making by the eager speech and over-reaching steps of the boys, hastening, boy-like, hours beforehand to the scene of anticipated excitement, trembling lest some happening of interest should be unseen by them. Job's war-horse was never half so eager for the fray. Hearing already the voices of others of their kind shouting in the village streets below, they do not pause a moment on the crest but plunge forward down the "dug-road" that slants along the steep hill-side, until it reaches the level plain below and debouches into the main street of the town.

But you, had you been of their company, must have halted on the hill to look off eastward where the sun is quivering in the thin yellow-and-white horizon-clouds that hang over green hills. You must have stopped to look at the Luzerne island in its many shades of green,

from the dark maple-leaf to the lighter cotton-wood and sycamore, the whole fringed by a margin of yet paler water-willows which dip their outermost boughs into the placid water of the broad Ohio, glistening in the early sunlight like the apocalyptic river of life. You must have paused and looked away in the other direction to the long stretch of river to the westward, till at last in a grand sweep to the south you lost sight of that majestic current, which first by the Indians, then by the French, and then by the English-speaking settlers has been called "The Beautiful." You must have looked across the mile-wide current to the little Kentucky village on the bank opposite you, its white houses shut in by a line of green hills behind. And just beneath, on the nearer bank, lies Luzerne, one of the oldest towns in this new country, and the fairest object in the landscape. There are no fine houses—only white "frame" and red brick ones, with now and then an aboriginal log-cabin standing like an old settler, unabashed among more genteel neighbors. But all the yards are full of apple-trees and rose-bushes and lilacs—*lay-locks* the people call them—and altheas and flowering almonds. Here one sees chimney-tops and roofs jutting out of the surrounding green of the trees, and there are large patches of unfenced greensward or "common" upon which the newly-milked cows are already congregating, their bells, on different keys, keeping up a ceaseless tinkling. You see the brand-new court-house with glittering brass ball above the belfry, standing in the treeless, grass-green "public square;" and there in plain sight is the old town pump in front of the court-house, and about it the boys and girls who have come hither for water.

But the party of country boys with whom we started

have almost reached the foot of the hill. They have gone down running, walking, and leaping by turns. Now and then one of them stops, and looking over the valley and the village, swings his cap and cries out: "Hurrah for Harrison and Tyler!" or, "Hurrah for Tippecanoe and Tyler too!" Not, perhaps, because he knows or cares anything about the candidates for the presidency, but because a young cock must flap his wings and crow. Most of the enthusiasm of a political canvass is the effervescence of animal spirits. The struggle of the leaders is to make this overflowing tide of surplus life grind their grists. It was the processions and hard cider and log-cabins of 1840 that gave the Whigs the election.

But now other parties of straggling boys and men are coming into the village, afoot and on horseback, over this hill, and over others, and along the river-banks; while skiffs are crossing from Kentucky. In the village the trees are full of birds; yellow-hammers, jays, blue-birds, sap-suckers, red-birds, pee-wees, cat-birds, martins, and all the others that abound in the genial climate of Southern Indiana, are filling the air with their whistling calls to one another; the singing locust sends forth everywhere in quick-following vibrant waves his curious notes; but we do not hear these things. The usually quiet streets have already the premonitory symptoms of the on-coming excitement of the day, and the village lads in Sunday clothes, but barefoot none the less, are singing lustily to one another, such refrains as this:

> "Hurrah for Harrison and Tyler!
> Beat the Dutch or bust your b'iler!"

to which some sturdy Democratic boy, resolved not to strike his colors, replies with a defiant, "Hurrah for Little

Van!" and the Whig, feeling himself in the ascendant for the day, responds by singing:

> "Little Van's a used-up man,
> A used-up man, a used-up man,
> A used-up man is he!"

But the opposite side can readily answer again with ditties quite as forcible and ungrammatical.

By this time it wants a quarter of six o'clock, and the bell in the belfry of the tavern is ringing in a jerky fashion its warning for breakfast. It is the one invariable thing —holidays may come and go, but the tavern bell never fails to ring at six and twelve and six, with a first bell fifteen minutes before the hours for meals. The movements of all the people in the town are regulated by this steady old bell, and were it to waver in its punctuality the life of the community would be thrown into disorder; clocks would have no regulator; meals would be out of time; farmers would not know when to start homeward; preachers would have no reminder of the length of their sermons.

By seven o'clock on this day of the barbecue, the village is in a state of general expectancy. Girls are traveling to and fro singly and in squads; women are talking to each other over garden fences, and at front gates; merchants in their Sunday clothes are standing on the sidewalks, and boys are hurrying away to the great beech-woods on the river-bank above the town, where the barbecue is to be held, and then hurrying back to the village to see what is to be seen there. Wagons, loaded with provisions of various sorts, are constantly arriving from the country and making their way direct to the barbecue ground.

"Where are you going, Roxy?" asks a girl of sixteen

in a lawn dress of another a year older, perhaps, in a bright new gingham. She speaks with that flutter of expectancy in her voice which girls always have at such times.

"To the beech-woods to see them roast the oxen—I thought it might please Bobo, here," and saying this she turned toward a pale boy whom she led by the hand.

"Please Bobo here," the lad echoed, with a childish exultation, and a strange wistful look in his eyes.

"I wonder what poor Bobo thinks about these things?" said the girl in lawn, looking at the lad's pale face and uncertain eyes.

"Bobo thinks about these things," he echoed, with a baby-like chuckle of happiness.

"I believe he does, don't you, Roxy?"

"I know he does," said Roxy, looking at her unfortunate charge tenderly; "to be sure he does."

"To be sure he does," chimed in Bobo, with a delight, which was increased by the smiles of the girls.

"You see," continued Roxy, "he was a very smart little fellow till he got that fall. I don't think his mind is injured, exactly. It is only the brain. It seems to me like old Mrs. Post's cataract over her eyes, a sort of film—a cataract over his mind, Twonnet.* Things don't get in and out well, but he seems to keep trying to think inside."

"Think inside!" cried the foolish fellow, beginning now to pull Roxy's hand to signify that he wanted to go, and saying, "See how nice!" as he pointed to the flags suspended over the street.

* This orthography best represents the common pronunciation of the name among the village people. It rhymes exactly with the word "bonnet."

"He is very fond of red," exclaimed Roxy.

"You're better than most people, Roxy. They'd be ashamed to take anybody that was—was—simple—you know, around with them."

"Why?" said Roxy, in surprise. "I think Bobo will always be one of those 'little ones' that are mentioned in the Bible. He don't know any harm, and I won't let him learn any. I could hardly live without him." Then she added in a lower tone: "I used to feel a little ashamed of him sometimes when people laughed. But that was a very bad feeling, I am sure. Good Bobo!"

"Good Bobo!" he chuckled, still pulling at Roxy's hand until she had to go on, Bobo expressing his pleasure whenever they passed beneath the flags. Going through the crowd of people in holiday dress, who were slaking their thirst at the town pump—the handle of which had no rest—they turned at last into the principal street running toward the river. The village was chiefly built upon the second bank or terrace. The street led them down to the lower bank, which was thinly occupied by one or two hay warehouses and some dilapidated dwellings. This part of the town had once been in a fair way to take the lead on account of its proximity to the landing, but in the great flood of 1832 the river had quite submerged it, rising almost to the height of the rooms on the second floor, and floating away one or two buildings. The possibility of a repetition of this calamity had prevented the erection of new houses on this level, and some of the better ones had been given up by their owners, so that now this part of the town was the domain of fishermen, boatmen, and those poor people who, having always to struggle to keep the soul in the body, are glad to get any shelter in which to keep the body itself. The fewness of

their chattels made removals easy, and since they were, most of them, amphibious creatures, they had no morbid dread of a freshet. Several of the better class, too, had held on to their rose-embowered homes on this lovely river-bank, declaring their belief that "the flood of '32" had deepened the channel of the river, so that there was now no danger.

But this lower bank seemed all the more beautiful to Roxy and Bobo that there were so few houses on it. The fences for the most part had not been rebuilt after the flood, so that there was a broad expanse of greensward. Their path took them along the river-bank, and to Roxy the wide river was always a source of undefined joy.

Following the hurrying squads of boys and men, and the track of wagons, they came at last into the forest of primeval beech that stretched away for a mile above the town, on this lower flat bordering the river. Here were not such beech-trees as grow on the rocky-hills of New England, stunted in height and with a divided trunk. These great trees, having a deep and fertile soil, push their trunks in stately columns heavenward, sending forth, everywhere, slender lateral limbs that droop soon after leaving the trunk, then recover themselves and droop a little once more at the distant tips, almost making Hogarth's line. The stillness of the deep shade was broken now by the invasion of busy men and idle boys; there were indescribable cries; the orders, advice, and jokes shouted from one to another, had a sound as of desecration. Here a table was being spread, set in the form of a hollow square to accommodate a thousand people; in another place hundreds of great loaves of bread were being cut into slices by men with sharp knives.

All of this pleased Bobo, but when at last Roxy took

him to the pit, thirty feet long, over which half a dozen oxen split in halves were undergoing the process called barbecuing, he was greatly excited. A great fire had been kept burning in this trench during the night, and now the bottom, six feet below the surface, was covered with a bed of glowing coals. As the beeves over this fire were turned from time to time, they kept up a constant hissing, as such a giant's broil must; and this sound with the intense heat terrified the lad.

He was better pleased when Roxy led him away to a tree where a thrifty farmer was selling ginger-cakes and cider, and spent all her money—five old-fashioned "coppers"—in buying for him a glass of cider which sold for five cents, with a scolloped ginger-cake thrown in.

But now the drum and fife were heard, and Roxy could plainly see a procession of Whigs from the country coming down the hill in the rear of the village. Others were coming by the other roads that led into the town. The crowd of idlers who scattered about the grove started pell-mell for the village, where all of these companies, in wagons and on horseback, were to be formed into one grand procession.

But Roxy took pains to secure for Bobo a perch on a fence-corner at the end of the lane by which the wood was entered. When at last the procession came, the poor fellow clapped his hands at sight of the wagons with log-cabins and great barrels of "hard cider" on them. Every waving banner gave him pleasure, and the drum and fife set him in an ecstasy. When the crowd cheered for Harrison and Tyler, he did not fail to join in the shout. The party of country boys who had come over the hill in the morning, observing the delight of the poor fellow, began to make sport of him, calling him an idiot, and

quizzing him with puzzling questions, thus drawing the attention of the crowd to Bobo, who sat on the fence, and to Roxy, who stood by, and tried in vain to shield him from the mockery.

Happily, about that time the procession halted on account of some difficulty in turning an angle with the long wagon which held the twenty-five allegorical young girls from Posey township, who represented the two dozen states of the Union, with a plump Hoosier Goddess of Liberty presiding over them. It happened that in the part of the procession which halted opposite to Bobo's perch on the fence, was Mark Bonamy, who was quite an important figure in the procession. His father—Colonel Bonamy—had been a member of Congress, and as a Whig son of a Democratic father of such prominence, the young man of twenty-one was made much of. Reckoned the most promising young man in the county, he was to-day to declaim his maiden speech before the great audience at the barbecue. But being a politician, already ambitious for office, he chose not to ride in the carriage with the "orators of the day," but on his own horse among the young men, to whose good-will he must look for his political success. The boys perched on the "rider" of the rail-fence were now asking Bobo questions, to which the simple fellow only gave answer by echoing the last words; and seeing the flush of pain on Roxy's face at the laughter thus excited, Mark called out to the boy to let Bobo alone.

"It don't matter," replied the boy; "he's only a fool, anyhow, if he is named Bonaparte."

At this the other boys tittered, but young Bonamy wheeled his horse out of the line, and, seizing Bobo's chief tormentor by the collar of his roundabout, gave him

a vigorous shaking, and then dropped him trembling with terror to the ground. His comrades, not wishing to meet the same punishment, leaped down upon the other side of the fence and dispersed into the crowd.

"Thank you, Mark," said Roxy.

"Oh, that's all right," answered Mark, with Western unconventionality. He tried to look unconscious as he again took his place in the ranks with reddened face, and the same crowd that had laughed at the ridicule put upon Bobo now cheered Mark for punishing his persecutor. Even Bobo showed satisfaction at the boy's downfall.

The Whig leaders of 1840 roasted beeves in order to persuade the independent voters to listen to arguments on the tariff; they washed down abstruse reasonings about the United States Bank with hard cider; and by good feeding persuaded the citizens to believe in internal improvement. But in order to the success of such a plan, it was necessary that the speeches should come first. The procession, therefore, was marched to the stand; the horsemen dismounted; the allegorical young ladies, who represented sovereign states dressed in white muslin, took places on the stand; and most of the other people seated themselves on the benches in front, while the drums and fifes were played on the platform, where also were ranged the speakers and some ornamental figures—an ex-Congressman, a colonel of the war of 1812, and a few lingering veterans of the Revolution, who sat near the front, that their gray hairs, solitary arms, and wooden legs might be the more conspicuous.

Since Mark Bonamy's interference in her behalf, Roxy had rapidly elevated the young man into a hero. She cared nothing whatever about banks or tariffs, or internal improvements, but now she was eager to hear Mark make

his speech. For when an enthusiastic young girl comes to admire a man for one thing, she straightway sets about finding other reasons for admiration.

Mark was sent to the front to make the opening speech, upon which one of the young men got up on a bench in the back part of the audience and cried: "Three cheers for Bonamy!" The grateful Roxy was pleased with this tribute to her hero, whose triumph seemed somewhat to be her own. Bobo recognized his deliverer and straightway pointed his finger at Mark, saying to Roxy:

"Looky, Roxy, looky there!"

Indeed, she had much trouble to keep him from pointing and talking throughout Mark's speech.

In Roxy's estimation the speech was an eloquent one. There were no learned discussions of banks and tariffs, no exhaustive treatment of the question of the propriety of internal improvements by the general government—all of these questions were to be handled by Judge Wool, who was double-shotted with statistics. Mark Bonamy's speech was not statesman-like. It was all the more popular for that. He had the advantage, to begin with, of a fine presence. His large, well-formed body, his healthful handsome countenance, his clear eye, and the general look of quick intelligence about him, and a certain air of good-fellowship won upon the audience, even while the young man stood with flushed face waiting for the cheering to subside. He did not lack self-possession, and his speech was full of adroit appeals to national pride and to party spirit. He made some allusions to the venerable soldiers who sat by him and to their comrades who slumbered in their bloody graves on the hard-fought fields of Bunker Hill and Brandywine, and Germantown and Trenton. He brought forth rounds of cheers by his re

marks on Harrison's log-cabin. Measured by the applause he gained it was the best speech of the day. A critic might have said that many of the most telling points were unfairly taken, but a critic has no place at a barbecue. How else could Roxy judge of such a speech but by the effect?

Very few of the voters were able to follow Judge Wool's argument against the veto of the Bank Bill and the removal of the deposits, and in favor of the adoption of a protective tariff that should save the country from the jaws of the British lion. But the old heads declared it a "mighty weighty" argument, and the young ones, feeling its heaviness, assented. After some stirring speeches by more magnetic men, there was music by the drum and fife, and then the hungry crowd surrounded the tables, on which there was little else but bread and the barbecued meat.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER THE FEAST.

When Roxy wended her way home that afternoon she found the streets full of people, many of whom had not limited their potations to hard cider. Flem Giddings, whose left arm had been shot away while he was ramming a cannon at a Fourth of July celebration, was very anxious to fight, but even his drunken companions were too chivalrous to fight with a one-armed man. So the poor cripple went round vainly defying every man he met, daring each one to fight, and declaring that he "could lick any two-fisted coward in town, by thunder and lightning!" A little further on, big Wash Jones kept staggering up to plucky little Dan McCrea, declaring that Dan was a coward. But Dan, who was not quite so drunk, was unwilling to strike Wash until at last the latter slapped Dan in the face, upon which the fiery little fellow let his hard fist fly, doubling the big man against a wall. Roxy, terrified at the disorder, was hurrying by at that moment; she saw the blow and the fall of the bleeding man, and she uttered a little startled cry. Forgetting herself and Bobo, the excited girl pushed through the crowd and undertook to lift up the fallen champion. Dan looked ashamed of his blow and the rest crowding round felt cowed when Roxy, with tears on her face said:

"What do you stand by for and let drunken men fight? Come, put poor Wash on his horse and send him home."

The men were quick enough now to lift up the sot and help him into his saddle. It was notorious that Wash could hardly be so drunk that he could not ride. He balanced himself in the saddle with difficulty, and the horse, who had learned to adapt himself to his reeling burden, swayed from side to side.

"Psh-shaw!" stuttered the rider as the blood trickled upon his mud-bespattered clothes, "aint I a-a-a purty sight? To go home to my wife lookin' this a-way!"

Whereupon he began to weep in a maudlin fashion and the men burst into a guffaw, Jim Peters declaring that he 'lowed Wash would preach his own funeral sermon when he was dead. But Roxy went home crying. For she was thinking of the woman whose probable sufferings she measured by her own sensibilities. And the men stood looking after her, declaring to one another that she was "a odd thing, to be sure."

When Roxy had passed the pump on her return, and had come into the quieter part of the village, Bobo, who had been looking at the flags, perceived that she was crying. He went directly in front of her, and taking out his handkerchief, began eagerly to wipe away the tears, saying in pitiful tones, "No, no! Roxy mustn't cry! Roxy mustn't cry!" But this sympathy only made the tears flow faster than ever, while Bobo still wiped them away, entreating her not to cry, until at last he began to cry himself, upon which Roxy, by a strong effort, controlled herself.

The house in which Roxy Adams lived was one of the original log-buildings of the village. It stood near

the edge of the common, and some distance from the large, four-chimneyed brick which was the home of the half-witted Bobo, who was first cousin to Roxy on the mother's side. Roxy's father was the principal shoemaker of the village; he could make an excellent pair of "rights and lefts," and if the customer insisted on having them, he would turn out the old-fashioned "evens"—boots that would fit either foot, and which, by change from one foot to another, could be made to wear more economically. The old shoemaker was also quite remarkable for the stubborn and contentious ability with which he discussed all those questions that agitated the village intellect of the time.

When Roxy passed in at the gate with Bobo, she found her father sitting under the apple-tree by the door. He gave her a word of reproof for her tardiness—not that she deserved it, but that, like other people of that day, he deemed it necessary to find fault with young people as often as possible. Roxy took the rebuke in silence, hastening to milk the old, black and white, spotted muley* cow, whose ugly, hornless head was visible over the back gate, where she stood in the alley, awaiting her usual pail of bran. Then supper had to be cooked in the wide-mouthed fire-place. The corn-dodgers—or, as they called them on the Indiana side of the river, the "pones"—were tossed from hand to hand until they had assumed the correct oval shape. Then they were deposited in the iron skillet already heated on the fire, coals were put beneath,

* This word, like many of our most curious and widely prevalent Americanisms, is not in the dictionaries. In parts of New York State a hornless cow is called a "mully" cow. Scotch immigrants use the word in this form and say that the cows in the Island of Mull are hornless. At the West "mully" has changed to "muley."

and a shovelful of hot coals heaped on the lid—or "led," as the Hoosiers called it, no doubt from a mistaken derivation of the word. The coffee was ground, and after being mixed with white of egg to "settle" it, was put into the pot; the singing iron tea-kettle hanging on the crane paid its tribute of hot water, and then the coffee-pot was set on the trivet, over the live coals.

By the time the tavern bell announced the arrival of the hour for eating, Roxy had called her father to supper, and Bobo, who found no place so pleasant as Roxy's home, sat down to supper with them. While they ate, they could see through the front door troops of horsemen, who, warned by the tavern bell, had taken their last drink in honor of the hero of Tippecanoe, and started homeward in various stages of inebriety, some hurrahing insanely for Harrison and Tyler, many hurrahing for nothing in particular.

The pitiful and religious soul of Roxy saw not a particle of the ludicrous side of this grotesque exhibition of humanity in voluntary craze. She saw—and exaggerated, perhaps—the domestic sorrow at the end of their several roads, and she saw them as a procession of lost souls riding pell-mell into a perdition which she had learned to regard as a place of literal fiery torment.

Is it strange, therefore, that when Mr. Whittaker, the Presbyterian minister, came in after supper, she should ask him earnestly and abruptly why God, who was full of love, should make this world, in which there was so awful a preponderance of sorrow? It was in vain that the minister tried to answer her by shifting the responsibility to the shoulders of man, who committed sin in Adam, "the federal head of the race;" it was in vain

that he took refuge in the sovereignty of God and the mystery of His existence. The girl saw only that God brought multitudes of people into life whose destiny was eternal sorrow and whose destiny must have been known to Him from the beginning. She did not once venture to doubt the goodness of God; but her spirit kept on wounding itself with its own questioning, and Mr. Whittaker, with all his logic, could give her no relief. For feeling often evades logic, be it never so discriminating. Whittaker, however, kept up the conversation, glad of any pretext for talk with Roxy. The shoemaker was pleased to see him puzzled by the girl's cleverness; but he seemed to side with Whittaker.

It was not considered proper at that day for a minister to spend so much time in the society of the unconverted as Whittaker did in that of Roxy's father; but the minister found him, in spite of his perversity, a most interesting sinner. Whittaker liked to sharpen his wits against those of the shoe-maker, who had read and thought a good deal in an eccentric way. The conversation was specially pleasant when the daughter listened to their discussion, for the minister was not yet quite twenty-five years of age, and what young man of twenty-five is insensible to the pleasure of talking, with a bright girl of seventeen for a listener?

When the minister and her father seated themselves under an apple-tree, it cost Roxy a pang to lose the pleasure of hearing them talk; but Bobo was exacting, and she sat down to amuse him with a monotonous play of her own devising, which consisted in rolling a marble round the tea-tray. Whittaker was not quite willing to lose his auditor; he asked Mr. Adams several times if the night air was not bad, but the shoe-maker

was in one of his perverse moods, and refused to take the hint.

At last the time came for Roxy to lead Bobo home, and as she came out the door, she heard her father say, in his most disputatious tone:

"I tell you, Mr. Whittaker, Henry the Eighth was the greatest monarch England ever had. He put down popery."

"But how about the women whose heads he cut off?" asked the preacher, laughing.

"That was a mere incident—a mere incident in his glorious career, sir," said the other, earnestly. "Half-a-dozen women's heads, more or less, are nothing to what he did for civil and religious liberty."

"But suppose one of the heads had been Roxy's?" queried Whittaker, watching Roxy as she unlatched the gate.

"That's nothing to do with it," persisted Adams. "Roxy's head is as light as the rest."

Roxy was a little hurt by her father's speech; but she knew his love of contradiction, and neither she nor any one else could ever be quite sure when he was in earnest. His most solemn beliefs were often put forth in badinage, and he delighted to mask his jests under the most vehement assertions. I doubt if he himself ever quite knew the difference between his irony and his convictions.

But after Roxy had gone the father relented a little. He confessed that the girl's foolishness was different from that of other girls. But it was folly none the less. For if a girl isn't a fool about fine clothes and beaux and all that, she's sure to make up for it by being a fool about religion. Here he paused for Whittaker to reply, but he

was silent, and Adams could not see in the darkness whether or not he was rendered uncomfortable by his remark. So, urged on by the demon of contradiction, he proceeded:

"Little or big, young or old, women are all fools. But Roxy had it rather different from the rest. It struck in with her. She was only ten years old when old Seth Lumley was sent to jail for stealing hogs, and his wife and three little children were pretty nigh starving. That little fool of a Roxy picked blackberries three Saturdays hand-running and brought them into town three miles, and sold them and gave all the money to the old woman. But the blackberry-briers tore more off her clothes than the berries came to. The little goose did it because she believed the Bible and all that about doing good to the poor and so on. She believes the Bible yet. She's the only person in town that's fool enough to think that all the stuff you preachers say is true and meant to be carried out. The rest of you don't believe it—at least nobody tries to do these things. They were just meant to sound nicely in church, you know."

Again he paused to give Whittaker a chance to contradict.

"I tell you," he went on, "I don't believe in over-pious folks. Roxy would take the shoes off her feet to give them to some lazy fool that ought to work. She will take care of Bobo, for instance. That gives Bobo's mother time to dress and run 'round. Now what's the use in Roxy's being such a fool? It's all because you preachers harp on self-denial so much. So it goes. The girls that are not fools are made fools by you preachers."

Adams had not meant to be so rude, but Whittaker's meekness under his stinging speeches was very provoking

Having set out to irritate his companion he became irritated at his own failure and was carried further than he intended. Whittaker thought best not to grow angry with this last remark, but laughed at it as pleasantry. The old shoe-maker's face, however, did not relax. He only looked sullen and fierce as though he had seriously intended to insult his guest.

"Preachers and talking cobblers *are* a demoralizing set, I grant," said Whittaker, rising to go.

"It is the chief business of a talking cobbler to protect people from the influence of preachers," answered Adams.

Suspecting the growing annoyance of his companion, Adams relented and began to cast about for some words with which to turn his savage and quite insincere speech into pleasantry. But the conversation was interrupted just then by the racket of two snare-drums, and one bass-drum, and the shrill screaming of a fife. The demonstrations of the day were being concluded by a torch-light procession. Both Whittaker and Adams were relieved by the interruption, which gave the minister a chance to say good-night and which gave Adams the inscriptions to read. The first one was a revolving transparency which had upon its first side "Out of;" then upon the second was the picture of a log-cabin; on the third, the words "into the;" on the fourth, a rude drawing of the "presidential mansion," as we republicans call it; so that it read to all beholders: "Out of a log-cabin into the White House." There were many others denouncing the administration, calling the president a "Dutchman," and reciting the military glories of the hero of Tippecanoe. Of course the changes were rung upon "hard cider," which was supposed to be General Harrison's meat and drink

At the very rear of the procession came a company of young fellows with a transparency inscribed: "For Representative, Mark Bonamy — the eloquent young Whig."

Meantime Roxy stood upon the steps of her aunt's house with Bobo, who was transported at seeing the bright display. She herself was quite pleased with the inscription which complimented Mark.

She handed little Bonaparte Hanks over to his mother, saying,

"Here's Bobo. He's been a good boy. He saw the torches, Aunt Henrietta."

"Saw the torches, Aunt Henrietta," said the lad, for he had lived with Roxy until he had come to style his mother as she did.

Aunt Henrietta did not pay much attention to Bobo. She sent him off to bed, and said to Roxy:

"He must be great company to you, Roxy. I like to leave him with you, for I know it makes you happy. And he thinks so much of you."

And then, when Roxy had said good-night and gone away home, Aunt Henrietta turned to Jemima, her "help," and remarked, with great benignity, that she did not know what that poor, motherless girl would do for society and enjoyment if it were not for Bo. And with this placid shifting of the obligation to the side most comfortable to herself, Mrs. Henrietta Hanks would fain have dismissed the subject. But social distinctions had not yet become well established in the West, and Jemima, who had been Mrs. Hanks' school-mate in childhood, and who still called her "Henriette," was in the habit of having her "say" in all discussions.

"You air rale kind, Henriette," she answered, with a

laugh; "it must be a favor to Roxy to slave herself for that poor, simple child. And as he don't hardly know one hand from t'other, he must be lots of comp'ny for the smartest girl in Luzerne," and Jemima Dumbleton laughed aloud.

Mrs. Hanks would have been angry, if it had not been that to get angry was troublesome—the more so that the indispensable Jemima was sure to keep her temper and get the best of any discussion. So the mistress only flushed a little, and replied:

"Don't give me any impertinence, Jemima. You haven't finished scrubbing the kitchen floor yet."

"I'm *much* obleeged," chuckled Jemima, half aloud, "it's a great privilege to scrub the floor. I'll have to git right down on my knees to express my gratitude," and down she knelt to resume her scouring of the floor, singing as she worked, with more vigor than melody, the words of an old chorus:

> "Oh, hender me not, fer I *will* serve the Lord,
> And I'll praise Him when I die."

As Roxy walked home beneath the black locust-trees that bordered the sidewalk, she had an uncomfortable sense of wrong. She knew her aunt too well to hope for any thanks for her pains with Bobo; but she could not quite get over expecting them. She had taken up the care of the boy because she saw him neglected, and because he was one of "the Bible little ones," as she phrased it. Her attentions to him had their spring in pure benevolence and religious devotion; but now she began to rebuke herself sternly for "seeking the praise of men." She offered an earnest prayer that this, her sin, might be

forgiven, and she resolved to be more kind than ever to Bobo.

As she entered the path that led out of the street to the edge of the common in which stood their house and garden-patch, she met the minister going home. He paused a moment to praise her for her self-denying kindness to her unfortunate cousin, then wished her good-night, and passed on. Spite of all Roxy's resolutions against caring for the praise of men, she found the appreciative words very sweet in her ears as she went on home in the stillness of the summer night.

When she came to the house, her father stood by the gate which led into the yard, already reproaching himself for his irascibility and his almost involuntary rudeness to Mr. Whittaker; and since he was discordant with himself, he was cross with Roxy.

"Much good you will ever get by taking care of Bobo," he said. "Your aunt won't thank you, or leave you a shoe-string when she dies."

Roxy did not reply, but went off to bed annoyed—not, however, at what her father had said to her. She was used to his irritability, and she knew, besides, that if she were to neglect Bobo, the crusty but tender-hearted father would be the first to take him up. But from his mood she saw that he had not parted pleasantly with Whittaker. And as she climbed the stairs she thought of Whittaker's visit and wondered whether he would be driven away by her father's harshness. And mingling with thoughts of the slender form of Whittaker in her imagination, there came thoughts of the fine presence of Mark Bonamy, and of his flowing speech. It was a pleasant world, after all. She could afford to put out of memory Aunt Henrietta's ingratitude and her father's moods

Mark, on his part, was at that very moment drinking to the success of the log-cabin candidate, and if Roxy could have seen him then, the picture with which she pleased herself of a high-toned and chivalrous young man would doubtless have lost some of the superfluous color which the events of the day had given it.

CHAPTER III.

THE COUNTRY HOE-DOWN.

It was some weeks after the barbecue that Mark Bonamy, now a Whig candidate for representative in the Indiana legislature, set out to electioneer. He was accompanied on this expedition by Major Tom Lathers, who was running for sheriff. Both the young politician and the old one had taken the precaution to dress themselves in country jeans, of undyed brown wool, commonly known as butternut. Lathers was a tall, slim, fibrous man, whose very face was stringy. He sat straight up on his rawboned, bobtailed horse and seemed forever looking off into vacancy, like a wistful greyhound. Mark had not succeeded in toning himself quite down to the country standard. He did his best to look the sloven, but there was that in his handsome face, well-nourished physique and graceful carriage that belied his butternut clothes. He was but masquerading after all. But Lathers was to homespun born; his gaunt, angular, tendinous figure, stepping when he walked as an automaton might when worked by cords and pulleys, was not unbecomingly clad in brown jeans and "stogy" boots.

The two were riding now toward Tanner Township, the wildest corner of the county. Here on the head-waters of Rocky Fork there was a dance appointed for this very evening, and the experienced Lathers had scented game.

"I tell you what, Bonamy, there's nothing like hoe-downs and the like. Everybody is good-natured at a

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dance. I went to church last Sunday—I always go to church when there is an election coming on. People think I am in a hopeful state and the like, you know, when they see that, and they vote for me to encourage me."

Here Lathers gave his companion a significant look from his small, twinkling gray eyes and then diving into his pocket he drew forth a plug of tobacco and bit off a large corner of it, which he masticated for a while with all the energy of a man of serious purpose.

"You see," he proceeded, "a man's mind is always on his own business even in meeting and the like, at least mine is when I'm running for anything. Well, I heerd Whittaker read something from the Apostle Saul, I believe. No, I ain't jist right shore, now. Now I come to think, I believe he said it was from the first apostle to the Corinthians, an' I swear I ain't well 'nough up in Bible to know who was the first and who was the second apostle to the Corinthians."

Here Lathers spat meditatively, while Mark turned his head away.

"Well, never mind. It was either Saul or Paul, I think. He said something about a feast, or big goin's-on and the like, at Jerusalem, that was to come off sometime shortly. And he said that a great and effectooal door was opened to him. Well, I says to myself, that old Saul—Saulomon his full name was, I reckon—understood his business mighty well. He took folks when they was a-havin' a good time and the like. Them was my meditations, Mark, in the house of the Lord."

And Major Lathers stopped to laugh and wink his gray eyes at Mark.

"An' when I heerd they was a good, ole-fashioned hoe-

down over onto Rocky Fork, I says a great and effectooal door—a big barn-door, it 'peared like—is opened to me and Mark Bonamy. Tanner Township is rightly Locofoco, but if you show your purty face among the women folks, and I give the men a little sawder and the like, you know, we'll use them up like the pilgrim fathers did the British on Bunker Hill that fourth of July."

About sunset the two arrived at Kirtley's double cabin. Already there were signs of the oncoming festivities.

"Hello, Old Gid," said Lathers, who knew just when familiarity was likely to win, "you alive yet, you old sinner? How air you, any way? It's mighty strange you an' me haint dead and done fer, after all we've been through. I wish I was half as hearty as you look."

"Well, Major, *is* that air you?" grinned Kirtley. "Howdy, ole coon?" and he reached out his hand. "I'm middlin' peart. Come over this way to get some votes, I reckon? 'Taint no use. Dernedest set of Locos over here you ever see."

"Oh, I know that. I tho't I'd come along and shake hands and the like with a ole friend, and quarrel with you about Old Hickory, jist for fun. You always hev a bottle of good whisky, and you don't kick a ole military friend out-doors on account of politics and the like. Blam'd if I don't feel more at home when I'm inside your door than I do in ary 'nother house in this county. How's the ole woman and that doggoned purty girl of yourn? I was afeard to bring Bonamy along, fer fear she'd make a fool an' the like out of him. But I told him you was a pertic'ler friend of his father, the colonel, and that you'd pertect him."

"Wal," said Kirtley, hesitating, "I wish I could make you comfortable. But the folks is got a hoe-down sot fer

to-night, an' you-all wont git no sleep ef you stop over here."

"A hoe-down!" cried Lathers, with feigned surprise. "Wal, ef I'd knowed that, I'd a fixed things so as to come to-morry night, seein' as I want to have a square, old-fashioned set-down and the like with you." Here he pulled a bottle of whisky from his pocket and passed it to Kirtley. "But next to a talk with you, I'd enjoy a reel with the girls, like we used to have when I was a youngster." Saying this, Lathers dismounted, without giving Kirtley (who was taking a strong pull at the bottle) time to object. But Mark hesitated.

"'Light, Mr. Bonamy, 'light," said Kirtley; "ef you kin put up with us we kin with you. Come right in, gentlemen, and I'll put your hosses out."

"Pshaw!" said Lathers, "let me put out my own. Bonamy and me knows how to work jist as well as you do. You Rocky Fork folks is a little stuck-up and the like, Kirtley. You don't know it, but you air. Blam'd ef you haint, now. You think they haint nobody as can do real tough work an' sich like but you. Now Bonamy, here, was brought up to that sort of thing, and as fer me, I was rocked in a gum stump."

The major instinctively spoke more improperly even than was his habit, in addressing Kirtley and others of his kind, though Tom Lather's English was bad enough at any time.

The old man grinned at the flattery, and Lathers passed the bottle again.

An hour later the dancers were assembling; the beds had been cleared out of the largest room in the cabin, and the fiddler—a plump and reprobate-looking man—was tuning his instrument, and scratching out snatches of "Hi

Betty Martin" and "Billy in the Lowgrounds" by way of testing its condition.

Major Lathers went jerking and bobbing round among the guests, but Mark was now the leader. Quick-witted and adroit, he delighted the young women, and by shrewd flattery managed not to make the young men jealous. He ate eagerly of the potatoes roasted in the ashes, which were the popular "refreshment." He danced a reel awkwardly enough, but that gave him a chance to ask some of the young men to explain it to him. Major Lathers knew the figure well, and was so proud of it that he jerked his slender legs up and down like a puppet in all the earlier dances. Bonamy might have captured half the votes on Rocky Run, if there had been no Nancy Kirtley. Nancy was at first detained from the room by her household cares, but it was not in Nancy's nature to devote herself long to the kitchen when she had a chance to effect the capture of the young man from town. About eight o'clock, when the dancing had been going on an hour, and Bonamy had made a most favorable impression, he observed a look of impatience on the face of the green country girl who was talking with him. Turning in the direction which her eyes took, he saw half-a-dozen young men gathered about a young woman whom he had not seen before, and who now stood with her back to him. He asked his companion who she was.

"Oh! that air plague-goned Nance Kirtley. All the boys makes fools of theirselves over her. She likes to make a fool of a man. *You* better look out, ole hoss!" said she with a polite warning to Mark.

Mark was curious to see Nancy's face, but he could not get away from his present companion without rudeness. That young lady, however, had less delicacy. For when

a gawky youth, ambitious to cut out the "town feller," came up with "Sal, take a reel with me?" she burst into a giggle, and handed over the roast potato she had been eating to Bonamy, saying, "Here, feller, hold my tater while I trot a reel with this 'ere hoss."

Taking the potato as he was bidden, Mark made use of his liberty to seek the acquaintance of the belle of Rocky Fork.

Nancy had purposely stationed herself with her back to the stranger that she might not seem to seek his favor. On his first approach she treated him stiffly and paid more attention than ever to the rude jokes of her country beaux, though she was in a flutter of flattered vanity from the moment in which she saw him approaching. Such game did not come in her way more than once.

Mark on his part was amazed. Such a face as hers would have been observed in any company, but such a face among the poor whiteys of Rocky Fork, seemed by contrast miraculous. There was no fire of intellect in it; no inward conflict had made on it a single line. It was simply a combination of natural symmetry, a clear, rather Oriental complexion and exuberant healthfulness. Feeling there was—sensuousness, vanity, and that good-nature which comes of self-complacency. Nancy Kirtley was one of those magnificent animals that are all the more magnificent for being only animals. It was beauty of the sort that one sees sometimes among quadroons—the beauty of Circassian women, perhaps,—perfect physical development, undisturbed and uninformed by a soul.

From the moment that Mark Bonamy looked upon this uncultivated girl in her new homespun and surrounded by her circle of hawbuck admirers, he began to forget all about the purpose of his visit to Rocky Run. Major Tom

Lathers, as he flung himself through a Virginia reel with a gait much like that of a stringhalt horse, was still anxiously watching Bonamy, and he mentally concluded that Mark was as sure to scorch his wings as a moth that had caught sight of a candle.

"Will you dance the next reel with me?" Mark asked somewhat eagerly of Nancy Kirtley.

"Must give Jim his turn first," said the crafty Nancy. "Give you the next chance, Mr. Bonamy, ef you keer fer it."

It was in vain that Mark's former companion, when she returned for her half-eaten potato, sought to engage him again in conversation. He did nothing but stand and wait for Nancy and look at her while she whirled through the next reel as Jim McGowan's partner. In fact, everybody else did much the same; all the young men declaring that she *was some, sartain*. She danced with a perfect *abandon*, for there is nothing a well-developed animal likes better than exercise and excitement; and perfect physical equilibrium always produces a certain grace of motion.

While Mark stood looking at Nancy, Major Lathers came and touched him on the shoulder.

"Mark," he whispered, "if you don't take your eyes off that air creature you're a gone tater, shore *as* shootin'. Don't you see that Jim McGowan's scowlin' at you now, and if you cut him out he'll be dead ag'inst you. Come, old feller, you'll git used up as bad as Julius Cæsar did when he went down into Egypt and fell in love with Pharaoh's daughter and the like, and got licked by it. Let an ole friend pull you out of the bulrushes and the like. Don't you have no more to do with that girl, do ye hear?"

"But I've promised to dance the next reel with her," pleaded Mark, feeling the force of Lathers's remark and

feeling his own powerlessness to resist the current upon which he was drifting.

"The devil you have!" cried the major. "Then you're a goner, sure enough. Saltpeter wont save you. All the young men'll be ag'inst you, because you've cut 'em out and sich like, and all the girls'll be down on you, because you run after the purtiest one. Don't be a fool, Mark. Think of my interest as well as your'n."

"Wait till I've had one reel," said Mark. "I'm only in for a little fun, you know. Isn't she a splendid creature, Major?"

"Splendid! the devil!" muttered Lathers, turning away and shrewdly meditating how to cut loose from Mark.

Mark danced his reel with Nancy, and then devoted himself to her. Having no further use for Jim, she snubbed him, and Jim swore that Bonamy shouldn't git a vote on the Fork. Nothing but Bonamy's excellent muscle prevented McGowan's taking a more summary revenge.

When at midnight the company marched out-of-doors and stationed themselves around a table made of rough boards supported by stakes driven in the ground, they found a rude but substantial supper of bacon and hominy, corn-bread, sweet cake and apple-pies. For luxury, there was coffee in place of the sassafras tea with which Rocky Fork was accustomed to regale itself, and, for a wonder, the sweet'nin' was "store sugar"—of the brown New Orleans variety—instead of "country," or maple molasses, such as was used on ordinary occasions. The cake, however, was made with the country molasses.

Mark, whose infatuation seemed to increase, devoted himself at supper to his Hebe, whom he would have liked better had she been entirely silent. It taxed his gallantry to laugh at her awkward and bearish pleasantries.

THE HOE-DOWN AT KIRTLEY'S.

"I say, Bonamy," whispered Lathers, "ef you don't flop round into the channel almighty quick, I shan't lash flatboats weth you no longer. I'll cut mine loose and swing around and leave you high and dry onto the san'-bar."

"I'll be a good boy after supper, Major," said Mark. Lathers saw that he was hopelessly enchanted by the siren of Rocky Fork, and he proceeded straightway to execute his threat. He sought out Jim McGowan, and told the irate fellow how he had done his best to keep Mark from makin' a fool of hisself.

"I'll pay him back," said Jim.

"I know'd you would," answered Lathers.

"He wont get no votes on Rocky Fork," said Jim.

"I tole him so," said the major. "He might know you'd hurt him, severe like, when he comes in and spiles your game an' the like. I'll git him away first thing in the mornin'. Then the girl'll find she's throw'd away her beau and got nothin' but a fool an' the like for one dance. She'll come back to you meeker'n Moses when the Philistines was after him. He'd orter know you could keep anybody from votin' fer him here, and git Whigs to trade off somewheres else. Now, for instance, ef you should git a lot of Rocky Forkers and the like to trade with Whigs —to say to some of my friends that ef they'd vote ag'inst Mark, you-all'd vote for me or the like, you might hit a enemy and do a good turn fer a friend. Besides you know I'm dead ag'inst the dog law, and dog law is what Rocky Fork don't want."

From Jim the major proceeded to talk with "old man Kirtley," to whom he said that he didn't blame Mark fer gittin' in love with sich a girl. He might do worse'n to marry sich a splendid creature and the like. Fer his part he'd tell Mark so in the mornin'. He also assured Mr.

Kirtley that fer his part he was dead ag'inst the dog law. Dogs an' sich like was one of the things a man had a right to in a free country. Poor men hadn't got many comforts, and dogs was one of 'em. The chief product of the Rocky Fork region, as the major knew, was dogs.

Lathers then talked to the "women folks." He said he didn't think so much of a purty face and sich like as he used to. What you wanted in a woman was to be of some account; and girls *too* good-looking got to be fools, and stuck-up like and got into trouble, like Cleopaytry, and the like, you know. He also took occasion to tell the ladies of Rocky Fork that he was dead ag'inst the dog law. Poor folks had as much right to dogs and *sich* like as rich folks to sheep and *sich* like.

To the young men Tom Lathers said he didn't believe in a man dancin' with one girl all the time, perticuler when he didn't mean to marry her and sich like. It was scandalious. When he come to Rocky Fork ag'in he wouldn't bring no town fellers and the like along. He believed in country folks himself, and besides he was dead ag'inst all your dog laws and the like. Ef he got to be sheriff he'd show 'em that dog laws couldn't be crammed down people's throats in this county. Didn't the Declaration, which our fathers signed on Bunker Hill, declare that all men was born free and equal? Wasn't a dog and sich like, as good as a sheep and *sich* like, he'd like to know; and if taxin' dogs wasn't taxation without representation, he'd jist like to know what was, now you know, hey?

With such blandishments Lathers spent the time until the party broke up with a final jig, when at length he succeeded in getting Mark away, but not until after nearly all of the guests had departed.

CHAPTER IV.

ELECTIONEERING.

"Mark," said the major, in a tone of paternal authority, and after long and deliberate chewing of his quid of tobacco, "ef it hadn't been for me, explaining and mollifying things and the like, you would have set all Rocky Fork ag'inst you. Why, Jim McGowan was bilin' mad. You mus'n't look at purty faces and the like too long, ef you mean to be a member this winter. A man like you owes somethin' to himself and—and his country and the like, now, you know. Hey?"

Mark was in no mood now to receive this remonstrance In the cool gray dawning of the morning, when the excitement of the night had passed off, there came to him a sense of having played the fool. A man never bears to be told that he has made a fool of himself, when he knows it beforehand.

"Major Lathers," retorted Mark, stiffly, "I didn't bring you along for a guardian. I'll have you know that I can take care of myself in this canvass. If I choose to enjoy myself for a few hours dancing with a pretty girl, what harm is it?"

"If you was to be beat, and the like, now, you know, by about six votes, you'd find out that folks as dances has to pay the blackest kind of nigger-fiddlers sometimes with compound interest and damages and costs, and sich like, all added in and multiplied. Don't let's you and me git into no squabble, nur nothin', like Cain and Abel did in

Paradise. I don't want to be no gardeen, nur the like, to no such rapid-goin' youth as you. Risk's too big, you know. You've got book-learnin', and you can speechify, now, you know, but fer whackin' about the bushes and the likes, ole Tom Lathers is hard to git ahead of. You shoot sharp at long range and off-hand. I clap my hands every time you shoot. But I pick up the votes and salt 'em down fer winter use and the like. Now, I think we better keep pards till election's over, anyhow. Ef you want to quarrel afterward, w'y go in, that's all, and I'm on hand. I done what I could to keep Rocky Fork from gittin' on a freshet last night, and if you go back on me now, it'll be ungrateful, and we'll both be beat all to thunder and the like."

With these words the breach was healed for the time, but Mark was sulky all that day.

A few days after the dance at Rocky Fork, Mark had an opportunity to retrieve his fortunes by making one of his taking speeches at the Republican meeting-house only a few miles away from Kirtley's, but in a neighborhood much more friendly to the Whig candidate. This Republican meeting-house had been built as a union church, in which all denominations were to worship by turns. But, in 1840, sectarian spirit ran too high for the lion and the lamb to lie down together. The Episcopal Methodists had quarreled with the Radicals, or Methodist Protestants, about the use of the church on the second and fourth Sundays in the month, while the Hardshells, or Anti-means Baptists had attempted to drive the Regular Baptists out of the morning hour, and the Two-seed Baptists and the Free-wills had complicated the matter, and the New Lights and the Adventists and the Disciples were bound also to assist in the fight. The result was

that the benches had been carried off first by one party, then by another, and there had been locks and padlocks innumerable broken from the door. So that the visionary experiment of a Republican meeting-house in a country where popular education was in its infancy and sectarian strife at its worst, had only resulted in teaching these militant Christians the arts of burglary and sacrilege. The Whigs and Democrats, however, managed to use the much-damaged church for political meetings without coming to blows over it. On this occasion Bonamy was to have a discussion with his opponent, the Democratic candidate for representative, one Henry Hardin. But, as Hardin had no gift for speech-making, while Mark had, there could be no doubt of the issue.

The Democrats for the most part came out in surly anticipation of defeat, but old Enoch Jackson, the wire-puller for the party in that part of the country, shook his head significantly and gave the "boys" to understand that "he knew somethin' or 'nother that would make the Whigs squirm." And it was passed round from one to another that "old Nuck had somethin' in his head." So the Democrats marched into the meeting with an unterrified air.

Mark Bonamy felt very sure of success. He was to make the last speech and Major Lathers assured his Whig friends that when Hardin was through with his speech, young Bonamy would chaw him all up and the like, now, you know. Hardin had, however, been carefully "coached" for the occasion and he made a fair argument of the heavier sort, against the National Bank, against internal improvements by the general government, and especially in favor of free trade, spicing his remarks, which were delivered in a loud, monotonous tone, with

many appeals to the popular prejudice against the Federalists, of whom, it was claimed, the Whigs were lineal descendants. At proper intervals in the speech, which was of uniform heaviness, Enoch Jackson would bring his heavy, well-oiled boot down upon the floor, whereupon his trained partisans followed his lead with energetic applause, which gave the exhausted orator time to breathe and to take a sip of water, while it also served to give an appearance of vivacity to the speech. But Bonamy felt himself able to brush away the effect of Hardin's speech with a dozen telling hits delivered in his magnetic manner.

As soon, therefore, as Hardin had ceased, Mark rose and began in his most conciliatory and vote-winning fashion:

"Fellow-citizens of Brown Township: I want to say in the beginning that it is with no animosity to Democrats that I rise to address you. I hurrahed for the hero of New Orleans when I was a boy. Here are the men who voted for my father. I have no unfriendly feeling toward them, I assure you."

"You're a turn-coat," cried one of the young men. But this was what Bonamy wanted. Contradiction was his foil.

"I am a turn-coat, am I?" he cried in a burst of indignation. "I will show you whether I am a turn-coat or not. Where did I learn the principle of protection? From General Jackson himself, as I will proceed to show."

But at this point everybody's attention was drawn to a storm of oaths coming from two voices without the door.

"You lie, you ——— scoundrel. I'll lick you within an inch of your life if you say another word."

The voice was Jim McGowan's, and Major Lathers, knowing at once that mischief was intended, closed the door just as the other voice cried:

"You dassent tech me with your little finger, you cussed coward you."

"Fellow-citizens," resumed Mark, "I have been called a turn-coat, now I——"

"Le' go of me," Jim McGowan was heard to say. "I kin kill Sam Peters the best day he ever saw. Le' go of me, I say."

"Le' go of him," cried Peters. "I'll spile his pro-file fer him."

Within there was confusion. Only Enoch Jackson appeared entirely quiet and really anxious to hear what Bonamy had to say. The rest would rather have seen a fight than to have heard the best speaker in the world.

"I have been called a turn-coat," resumed Mark, "and I want to ——"

But here the cries out-of-doors indicated that the two had broken loose from their friends and were about to have a "stand up fight." This was too much for the audience. It was of no use for Mark to say "Fellow-citizens." The fellow-citizens were already forming a ring around Sam Peters and Jim McGowan, who, on their parts, had torn off their shirts and stood stripped for the fight, which for some reason they delayed, in spite of their vehement protestations of eagerness for it. Bonamy was left with no auditors but Major Lathers, Enoch Jackson, who looked at him innocently, and his opponent, who sat decorously waiting for him to proceed.

When Mark desisted from speaking, Enoch Jackson's

triumph was complete, but he set out to walk home with the gravity of a statesman. Mark, however, did not give up the battle easily. He called a Whig justice into the church, swore out a writ against Peters and McGowan, and helped arrest them with his own hands. This prompt action saved him from the ignominy of entire defeat, but it was too late to save the day. By the time the participants in this sham battle had paid their fines, the day had so far waned that it was impossible to rally the audience to listen to any further speaking.

Lathers did not say anything to Mark as they rode away. Bonamy was in continual expectation of a reprimand for his folly in running after "purty girls and the like." But Lathers knew that Mark needed no further rebuke.

From that time until the day of election Bonamy gave his whole heart to the canvass, and his taking speeches and insinuating manners enabled him in some degree to retrieve the error he had committed. It was only on the very last day of that exciting campaign that he ventured to turn aside on his way home and ask for a drink of water at old Gid Kirtley's fence, loitering half an hour without dismounting, while Nancy Kirtley, on the other side of the fence, made Mark forget her foolish talk by shifting from one attitude to another so as to display face and figure to the best advantage. Only the necessity for reaching Luzerne that evening in time for "the grand rally" with which the canvass closed, could have persuaded the dazzled young man to cut short the interview. This he found hard of accomplishment, the bewitching siren using all her endeavor to detain him. It was only by sacrificing a watch-seal of no great value, upon which he saw her covetous eyes fastened, that he succeeded in

disentangling himself. He swore at himself half the way to Luzerne for his "devilish imprudence" in giving her the trinket. But a hopeful temperament brought him peace after a while, and he made a most effective appeal to the Whigs at Luzerne to "rally" round the hero of Tippecanoe.

CHAPTER V.

ELECTION DAY.

You have often wondered, no doubt, why men should make a business of politics. There is, of course, the love of publicity and power; but, with the smaller politicians, this hardly accounts for the eagerness with which they give themselves to a business so full of toil, rudeness, and anxiety. I doubt not the love of combat and the love of hazard lie at the root of this fascination. This playing the desperate stake of a man's destiny against another man's equal risk, must be very exciting to him who has the impulse and the courage of a gamester.

The grand rally of each party had been held in the village of Luzerne, and other rallies not so grand had been rallied at all the other places in the county. It was at last the morning of the election day. Politicians awoke from troubled slumbers with a start. I fancy election day must be hard on the candidate; there is so little for him to do. The whippers-in are busy enough, each at his place, but the candidate can only wait till night-fall. And all the while he is conscious that men are observing him, ready to note the slightest symptom of uneasiness. With all this, under the ballot system, he must remain in entire ignorance of the state of the poll until the election is concluded.

On that first Monday in the August of 1840, the town was thronged with people by seven o'clock. The old politicians voted silently early in the morning. Then came

the noisy crowd who could not vote without swearing and quarreling. There were shouts for "Little Van," and cries of "Hurrah for Tippecanoe," for, though the presidential election came months later, the state elections would go far toward deciding the contest by the weight of their example.

At midday, when the crowd was greatest, old Bob Harwell, a soldier of the Revolution, who had managed to live to an advanced age, by dint of persistent drunkenness and general worthlessness, was drawn to the polls in a carriage amid deafening cheers for the veteran, from the Whigs. The old man appreciated the dramatic position. Presenting his ballot with a trembling hand, he lifted his hat and swung it feebly round his head.

"Boys," he cried, in a quavering, mock-heroic voice, "I fit under Gineral Washi'ton, an' I voted fer him, an' now I've voted fer General Harrison" (the old man believed that he had), "and if the hero of Tippecanoe is elected, I want to die straight out and be the fust one to go to heaven and tell Washi'ton that Gineral Harrison's elected! Hurrah!"

"You'll be a mighty long while a-gittin' thar, you old sinner," cried one of the Democrats.

The old Swiss settlers and their descendants voted the Democratic ticket, probably from a liking to the name of the party. It is certain that they knew as little as their American fellow-citizens about the questions of finance which divided the two parties. After the Revolutionary relic had departed, there came an old Frenchman—one Pierre Larousse—who was commonly classed with the Swiss on account of his language, but who voted with the Whigs.

"W'at for you vote the W'ig tigget, eh?" cried out

David Croissant, one of the older Swiss. "You are a turn-goat, to come to Amereeky an' not pe a damograt. *Sac-à-papier! Entrailles de poules!*"

"*Sac-r-r-ré! Le diable!*" burst out Larousse. "You dinks I is durn-goat. I dinks you lies one varee leetle pit. By gare! I nayvare pe a damograt. I see 'nough of damograts. *Sacr-r-ré!* I leef in Paree. Robespierre vas a damograt. I hafe to veel of my head avairy morning to see eef it vas nod shop off. I no likes your damograts. Doo much plud. I likes my head zave and zound, eh? By gare! *Quel sacré imbecile!*"

It was with some difficulty that the Swiss Democrat and the French Whig were restrained from following their stout French oaths with stouter blows.

With such undignified accompaniments and interludes did the American citizen of that day perform the freeman's "kingliest act" of voting. The champion fighter of the western end of the county cheerfully accepted "a dare" from the champion fighter from the eastern end of the county, and the two went outside of the corporation line, and in the shade of the beautiful poplars on the river bank pummeled each other in a friendly way until the challenger, finding that his antagonist had entirely stopped respiration, was forced to "hollow calf-rope," that is, to signify by gestures that he was beaten.

Night came, and with it more drinking, noise, and fighting, filling up the time till the returns should come in. After nine o'clock, horsemen came galloping in, first by one road and then by another, bringing news from country precincts. On the arrival of the messenger, there was always a rush of the waiting idlers to that part of the public square between the court-house door and the town-pump. Here the tidings were delivered by the messen

gers and each party cheered in turn as the news showed that the victory wavered first to one side and then to the other. The Democrats became excited when they found that the county, which always had been a "stronghold," might possibly be carried by the Whigs. It was to them the first swash of the great opposition wave that swept the followers of Jackson from their twelve years' hold on the government.

In the first returns, Bonamy ran a few votes ahead of his ticket, and his friends were sure of his election. But with Mark there was a fearful waiting for the punishment of his sins. His flirtation with Nancy Kirtley did not seem half so amusing to him now that in a close election he began to see that Rocky Fork might put back the fulfillment of his ambition for years. Paying the fiddler is a great stimulus to the pricks of conscience.

When the returns from the Rocky Fork precinct were read, Mark was astonished to hear that where nearly every vote was Democratic, his friend, Major Lathers, had received twenty-five votes. His own vote in the same poll was precisely one. This must have been cast by old Gid Kirtley. Every other man in the Fork was his enemy. When the adjacent voting-places in Brown Township came to be heard from through the mud-bespattered messengers who had ridden their raw-boned steeds out of breath for the good of their country, Mark caught a little glimpse of the adroit hand of Lathers. He had lost twenty-four Whig votes to offset the twenty-five Democratic votes which Lathers received. There had then been a system of "trading off." This is what Lathers had been doing, while he, like a fool, had been dancing attendance on "that confounded Nancy Kirtley," as he now called her in his remorseful soliloquies.

At ten o'clock the two remote townships--York and Posey—were yet to be heard from. The whole case was to be decided by them. It was still uncertain whether the Whigs or the Democrats had carried the county; but there was little hope that the two towns, usually Democratic, would give Whig majority enough to elect Bonamy. Meantime, the crowd were discussing the returns from Tanner Township. What made Bonamy fall so far behind? When the story of the dance began to be circulated, there was much derision of Mark's weakness and much chuckling over the shrewdness by which Major Lathers had made it serve his turn. But Lathers was quite unwilling to confess that he had betrayed his friend. When asked about his increased vote, he declared that "the dog-law and the likes done the business."

As the time wore on toward eleven, the impatient crowd moved to the upper part of the town, where they would intercept the messenger from York and Posey. Here, under the locusts in front of a little red building used as a hatter's shop, they stood awaiting the vote that was to decide the awful question of the choice of six or eight petty officers—a question which seemed to the excited partisans one of supreme moment.

All at once the horse's feet are heard splashing through mud and water. Everybody watches eagerly to see whether it be a Whig or a Democrat who rides, for, as is the messenger, so is his message.

"Hurray for York and Posey!"

Mark, who is in the crowd, notes that it is the voice of Dan Hoover, the Whig ringleader in York. The voters surround him and demand the returns, for the Democrats still hope that Bonamy is beaten. But they can get but

"HURRAY FOR YORK AND POSEY!"

one reply from the messenger, who swings his hat and rises in his saddle to cry:

"Hurray for York and Posey!"

"Well, what about York and Posey, Hoover? We want to know," cries Mark, who can bear the suspense no longer. But Hoover is crazed with whisky and can give no intelligible account of the election in York and Posey. He responds to every question by rising in his stirrups, swinging his hat and bellowing out:

"Hurray for York and Posey, I say!"

After half an hour of futile endeavor to extract anything more definite from him, Mark hit upon an expedient.

"I say, Dan, come over to Dixon's and get a drink, you're getting hoarse."

This appeal touched the patriotic man. Mark got the spell of iteration broken and persuaded Hoover to give him a memorandum which he carried in his pocket and which read:

> "York gives 19 majority for the Whig ticket,
> Posey gives 7 majority for the same,
> Bonamy a little ahead of the ticket."

This indicated Mark's election. But he did not sleep soundly until two days later when the careful official count gave him a majority of thirteen.

With this favorable result his remorse for having cheated poor Jim McGowan out of his sweetheart became sensibly less, though he laid away some maxims of caution for himself, as that he must not run such risks again. He was not bad, this Mark Bonamy. He was only one of those men whose character has not hardened. He was like a shifting sand-bank that lay open on all sides to the water;

every rise and fall or change of direction in the current of influence went over him. There are men not bad who may come to do very bad things from mere impressibility. He was not good, but should he chance to be seized by some power strong enough to master him, he might come to be good. Circumstances, provided they are sufficiently severe, may even harden such negatives into fixed character, either good or bad, after a while. But in Mark's present condition, full of exuberant physical life and passion, with quick perceptions, a lively imagination, ambitious vanity, a winning address and plenty of *bonhommie*, it was a sort of pitch and toss between devil and guardian angel for possession.

Set it down to his credit that he had kept sober on this election night. His victory indeed was not yet sure enough to justify a rejoicing which might prove to be premature. Drunkenness, moreover, was not an inherent tendency with Bonamy. If he now and then drank too much, it was not from hereditary hunger for stimulant, much less from a gluttonous love of the pleasures of gust. The quickened sense of his imprudence in the matter of the dance at Rocky Fork had a restraining effect upon him on election day. At any rate, he walked home at midnight with no other elation than that of having carried the election; and even this joy was moderated by a fear that the official count might yet overthrow his victory. It was while walking in this mood of half-exultation that Bonamy overtook Roxy Adams and her friend Twonnet, just in the shadow of the silent steam-mill.

"Good-evening, or good-morning, I declare I don't know which to say," he laughed as he came upon them. "You haven't been waiting for election returns, have you?"

"Have you heard, Mark? are you elected?" inquired Roxy, with an eagerness that flattered Bonamy.

"Yes, I am elected, but barely," he replied. "But what on earth are you girls taking a walk at midnight for? I'll bet Roxy's been sitting up somewhere?"

"Yes," said Twonnet, whose volatile spirits could not be damped by any circumstances, "of course we've been sitting up, since we haven't gone to bed. It doesn't take a member of the legislature to tell that, Honorable Mr. Bonamy."

This sort of banter from his old school-mate was very agreeable. Mark liked to have his new dignity aired even in jest, and in a western village where a native is never quite able to shed his Christian name, such freedoms are always enjoyed.

"But where have you been?" asked Mark, as he walked along with them.

"Up at Haz Kirtley's. His baby died about an hour ago," said Roxy, "and I sent for Twonnet to tell them how to make a shroud. She understands such things, you know."

"That's just what I am good for," put in Twonnet, "I never thought of that before. I knew that nothing was made in vain. There ought to be one woman in a town that knows how to make shrouds for dead people. That's me. But Roxy—I'll tell you what she's good for," continued the enthusiastic Swiss girl with great vivacity; "she keeps people out of shrouds. I might put up a sign, Mark, and let it read: 'Antoinette Lefaure, Shroud-maker.' How does that sound?"

"Strangers never would believe that you were the person meant," said Mark. "One sight of your face would make them think you had never seen a corpse. Besides,

you couldn't keep from laughing at a funeral, Twonnet, you know you couldn't."

"I know it," she said, and her clear laugh burst forth at the thought. "I giggled to-night right over that poor dead baby, and I could 'a' whipped myself for it, too. You see, Haz Kirtley's sister was there. Haz is ignorant enough, but his sister—oh my!" and Twonnet paused to laugh again.

"Oh, don't, Twonnet—don't laugh so," said Roxy. "I declare I can't get over that poor child's sufferings and its mother's scream when she saw it was dead. I used to think low people of that sort hadn't much feeling, but they have. That sister of Haz's is an ignorant girl, and I don't like her much, but she *is* beautiful."

"She's the prettiest creature I ever saw," said Twonnet. "But when she looked at me so solemnly out of her large, bright eyes and told me that she knew that the baby must die, 'bekase the screech-owl hollered and the dog kep' up sich a yowlin' the livelong night,' I thought *I'd* die."

Mark could make but little reply to this. He had not thought of any kinship between Haz Kirtley, the dray man, and Nancy Kirtley a dozen miles away on Rocky Fork. Had Nancy come into town to-day to be his Nemesis? He heartily wished he had never seen her. Without suspecting the true state of the case, Twonnet was seized with an uncontrollable impulse to tease.

"By the way, Mark," she began again, "while I was cutting out the shroud, Nancy Kirtley told me in confidence that she knew you well. She spoke of you as though you were a very particular friend, indeed."

"A candidate has to be everybody's very particular friend," said Mark, in a tone of annoyance, thinking of the seal he had given away the day before.

"She said you couldn't trot a reel very well, though," persisted Twonnet. "She claims to have danced with you all night, and she ought to know."

"Pshaw!" said Mark, "What a yarn!"

The evident vexation of Bonamy delighted Twonnet.

"Poor old Mr. White!" interrupted Roxy, who wished to make a diversion in Mark's favor. "There's his candle burning yet. They say he hasn't been able to sleep without it for thirty years. It must be an awful thing to have such a conscience."

Something in Mark's mood made him feel in an unrea sonable way that this allusion to Mr. White's conscience was a thrust at himself. White was an old man who had shot and killed a man in a street affray, many years before, when the territory of Indiana was yet new and lawless, but the old man from that day had never slept without a light in his room.

They had now reached the little gate in the paling fence in front of Twonnet Lefaure's home, and Mark was glad to bid the vivacious tease good-night, and to walk on with Roxy, whose house lay a little further away in the direction of his own home. Now that Twonnet was out of sight his complacency had returned; but he was quite in the mood to-night to wish to live better, and he confided to Roxy his purpose to "turn over a new leaf," the more readily since he knew that she would cordially approve it, and approval was what he craved now more than anything else.

Besides, Roxy was the saint of the town. In a village nobody has to wait long to find a "mission." He who can do anything well is straightway recognized, and his vocations are numerous. The woman who has a genius for dress is forthwith called in consultation at all those

critical life-and-death moments when dresses are to be made for a wedding, an infare, or a funeral. And the other woman whose touch is tender, magnetic, and life-giving, is asked to "set up" with the sick in all critical cases. Such was Roxy Adams. The gift of helpfulness was born in her; and to possess the gift of helpfulness is to be mortgaged to all who need.

That night Roxy climbed the steep stairs to her room, and went to bed without writing in her diary. When one's heart is full, one is not apt to drop a plummet line into it; and now Roxy was happy in the reaction which helpfulness brings—for an angel can never make other people as happy as the angel is. And she was pleased that Mark had carried the election, and pleased to think that perhaps she had "dropped a word in season" that might do him good.

And while the innocent-hearted girl was praying for him, Mark was inwardly cursing the day he had met Nancy Kirtley, and resolving to cut her acquaintance, by degrees.

CHAPTER VI

A GENRE PIECE.

WHITTAKER was one of those people who take offense gradually. Adams's rude remarks about preachers had rankled in him. The first day after he made up his mind that it was offensive. In two or three days he concluded that he would not visit the keen-witted but aggressive shoe-maker again until some apology should be made. By the time the election was over he doubted whether he ought to greet Mr. Adams on the street if he should chance to meet him. At least he would let his crusty friend make the first advance.

Now Adams was penitent for his rudeness even while he was being rude; it was an involuntary ferocity. He had regretted the words before he uttered them. He knew that he ought to apologize, but he must do even that by contraries. Meeting the minister one afternoon, right at the town pump, he stationed himself so as to block Whittaker's path, bowed, smiled grimly, and then came out with:

"Mr. Whittaker, you and I had some sharp words in our discussion about good old Henry VIII., the last time you were at my house. You haven't been there since, and you haven't been in the shop, either. It occurs to me that may be you said something on that occasion for which you would like to apologize. If so, you now have an opportunity."

This was said with such droll, mock-earnestness, that Whittaker could not but laugh.

"Of course I will apologize, Mr. Adams," he said, not without emphasis on the pronoun.

"And I," said the other, lifting himself up as if to represent the height of his own magnanimity—"and I will freely forgive you. Come and see me to-night. I haven't had a human soul to quarrel with since you were there before, except Roxy, and she won't quarrel back worth a cent. Now the old score's wiped out and we've settled Bluebeard and his wives, come 'round to-night and abuse me about something else."

"I'll come this very evening," said Whittaker.

"Now?"

"No; this evening."

"Oh! you're a confirmed Yankee," said Adams. "Why, it's evening now. After supper we call it night. Come, let's reconcile the confusion of tongues. Come to supper. I suppose you call it tea. Come, we'll teach you English if you live in these wild heathen parts long. Now I've made up, I am aching to quarrel, I tell you."

Mr. Whittaker made some feeble resistance. But the village society was so insipid that he found in himself a yearning for the stimulant conversation of the paradoxical Adams. It was a relief to talk with somebody who did not give an *ex officio* deference to a minister's opinion. Perhaps there was an unconscious inclination to see Roxy again, but this did not come into the category of admitted reasons for eating supper with the shoe-maker.

When Roxy saw Mr. Whittaker coming home with her father, she put hat upon the reluctant Bobo and sent him home. Then she began to "fly around," as the western phrase is, to get a supper "fit for a preacher." If Mr

Whittaker had been observant of trifles he might have foretold the character of the supper, for the "company supper," among the better families in a western town did not vary much. There was commonly fried chicken in a rich gravy made with cream; there was strong coffee with plenty of loaf-sugar and cream; there might be "preserves" of apple, or peach, or quince, of a tempting transparency, and smothered with cream; and then there were generally hot biscuits of snowy whiteness, or some of those wonderful "corn batter-cakes," which dwellers north of the great corn belt have never tasted. Western housekeepers are all Marthas. They feel obliged to "put themselves about," as the Scotch say, when they have company. And so Roxy got out the old china tea-pot and sugar-bowl which had come down from her grandmother, divers parts of handles, lids, and spouts having suffered those accidents which china is heir to, and been judiciously mended with cement. There were yet three tea-cups and two saucers of the old set left. The cups had dainty handles and were striped and flowered with gilt. She served the two saucers to her guest and her father, while she was forced to use a china cup with a saucer which did not match. I may add in digression that table manners were not the same then and there as now and here. Then one must not drink from the cup, but only from the saucer, into which the coffee was poured to cool. Such loose food as could not be eaten with an old-fashioned steel fork with two tines was gracefully and daintily shovelled into the mouth with the knife, but it was *de rigeur* that the knife should be presented with the back towards the lips.

Supper over, the minister and the shoe-maker fell into a dispute, of course, and as Whittaker persisted in exasperating Adams by his politeness, and especially by his down-

east interrogative of "What say?" when he did not comprehend the drift of his companion's remark, the rudeness of the shoe-maker might have grown as pronounced as it had been before, if a kindly chance had not made a break in the talk. Old Tom Roberts—or, as the people would pronounce it, "Robberds"—had brought a load of unpressed hay to town, and having stood all day upon the street without finding a purchaser, had resolved in sheer despair to make a virtue of a necessity, and get rid of his hay by paying a long-standing debt for a pair of boots. The opportunity to collect such a debt was not to be missed, and Adams found it necessary to forego the company of his guest while he should stow away the hay in the mow, as Roberts pitched it off the wagon.

But Roxy, to make amends for her father's absence, hurried through with her work, and when she had cleared away the "supper things," sat down in the sitting-room. There was an old-fashioned fire-place stuffed full of great green asparagus bushes now, to hide its black walls. Above was the mantel-piece, over which hung a common print of "Washington crossing the Delaware." In one corner stood the tall clock, whose loud, slow, steady, sixty beats to the minute was typical of the way in which time passed in those unprogressive days. There is a characteristic pertness and unsteadiness about the ticking of clocks nowadays—sharp-set, jerky things, with brass inside.

Roxy lit a candle and set it upon the round center-table of cherry-wood which stood in the middle of the room, the floor of which was covered with bright new rag-carpet; and then, while Whittaker sat in the red, gilt-striped, rocking arm-chair, she sat upon a straight-back, splint-bottom rocker swaying herself gently to and fro as she knitted and talked. A malediction on the evil genius who invented knitting

machines! There never was any accompaniment to talk like the click of knitting-needles. The employment of the fingers gives relief from all nervousness, gives excuse for all silence, gives occasion for droopings of the eyes, while it does not in fact preoccupy the mind at all. And then let us forever maintain with sweet Charles Lamb, that there is no light like candle-light; it gives the mixed light and shadow so much prized by the old painters. Indeed, Roxy looked like a figure out of an ancient picture, as she sat there with the high lights brought out by the soft illumination of the candle, and with her background of visible obscurity. Hers was not what you would call a handsome face, in the physical sense. There was no sensuous beauty of red lips and softly rounded cheeks. But it was indeed a very extraordinary face, full of passionate ideality, and with high enthusiasms shining through it. I have seen an emblematic face in an illuminated title to the Gospel of Matthew that was full of a quiet, heavenly joy, as though there were good tidings within, ever waiting to be told. This pure gladness there was in Roxy as she looked up now and then from her knitting. It was such a face as a master would have loved to paint, and would have worshipped after he had painted it. So it seemed to Whittaker, as he sat on one side of the table trying to guess which it was of all the saints he had seen in old prints that she was like. His eye took in the mantel-piece and the old clock in the corner, almost lost in the shadow, and, though he was not an artist, the sentiment of the picture moved him deeply.

Like most men who have lived bookish lives, Whittaker thought it needful to adapt his speech to the feminine understanding. He began talking to Roxy of her father, her garden, her chickens, her friends; but to all of his

remarks or inquiries upon these subjects Roxy answered half absently. The minister was puzzled by this, and while he debated what course was best, the conversation flagged and an awkward silence ensued, which was presently broken by Roxy asking him what he thought of the experiences of President Edwards's wife.

Mr. Whittaker started a little. What did a village girl, and a Methodist at that, know of the experiences of Jonathan Edwards's wife? This then was the ground on which she was to meet him—not chickens, or garden, or girls, or beaus! From the experiences of Mrs. Edwards Roxy passed to the saints in the Methodist calendar—to Mrs. Fletcher, the lady preacher, to Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, who accepted banishment to her mother's kitchen as a penalty for her piety, and thence to Lady Huntington, who was better known to Whittaker. The minister listened with wonder as her face glowed with sympathetic enthusiasm and thought he detected the latent ambition to be such a saint as these. He was a New Englander, and the training of a quieter school of religion had its place with him, but all the more did he wonder at finding in the heart of this imaginative girl an altar on which was burning so bright a flame of mystical devotion. He noticed that in that face illuminated from within, there was something about the set of the lip that indicated a great endurance of purpose. This mysticism might come to be more than a sentiment.

Mr. Adams came back again after a while and started a discussion on the merits of Napoleon Bonaparte, in which Mr. Whittaker ought to have been much interested. But somehow he did not now care anything about the justice or injustice of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien, and all the rasping paradoxes which the contradictory

shoe-maker could put forth failed to arouse in him any spirit of contradiction. For Roxy had by this time put down her knitting and was passing in and out of the room attending to her household duties, and the preacher had come to feel that somehow the red-and-yellow, striped rag carpet, and the old clock and the splint-bottom chairs were made lovely by her presence. He watched her as she came in and went out, and wondered as he had often wondered before at that look of gladness in her face. He heard Mr. Adams say something about Bonaparte's being the one man in modern times who understood that the people needed to be governed. But what did he care for Bonaparte, or for modern times? Here was a saint—a very flesh and blood saint. A plague on all Bonapartes and garrulous shoe-makers!

And so the conversation lagged. The preacher was dull. He fell to agreeing in an imbecile fashion with everything Adams said. The latter, in sheer despair, vehemently asserted that Napoleon did right to divorce Josephine, to which Mr. Whittaker agreed, not awaking from his absent mood until he saw the look of surprise in Roxy's face. Then he stammered:

"Oh, I didn't know; what was I saying? What was your remark? I'm afraid I did not understand it. I thought you said Bonaparte did right to marry Josephine."

"No; to divorce her," said Adams. "You are not well to-night?"

"No, not very—pretty well though for me; but excuse me, I didn't mean to agree with you about divorce. I think Bonaparte showed himself an atrocious scoundrel in that whole affair."

"Oh, you do, do you?" cried the other, pleased that he had at last started the game from cover. But when he

ended a new eulogy upon Bonaparte and divorce, and waited for another reply, Mr. Whittaker was engaged in comparing a silhouette portrait of Roxy's mother which hung near the clock, with the profile of Roxy, who stood at the window looking under the half-raised curtain at the crescent moon bravely sailing its little boat through a blue sea beset with great, white, cloud-bergs against which it seemed ever about to go to wreck. When Mr. Adams found that his companion was not in the least interested in that "splendid prodigy" which had "towered among us wrapped in the solitude of his own originality," he gave up in despair and waited in the vain hope that the other would start something which might offer a better chance for contradiction. The minister, feeling embarrassed by his own inattentiveness, soon excused himself and bade Roxy and her father good-night. Once out of the house he strolled absently through the common, then back into the town, under the shadow of the trees, to his home in the house of Twonnet Lefaure's father.

The Swiss in that day held rigidly to Presbyterianism—that is to say, the few who were religious at all, attended the Presbyterian church. While they held it to be a deep and eternal disgrace for a Swiss to be anything but a Presbyterian, most of them, like Twonnet's father, did not much like a Presbyterianism which forbade them to hunt and fish on Sunday or to drink good wine. It was not so in the old country they declared.

But Twonnet's mother was a Presbyterian truly devout, and the minister had sought board in a Swiss family that he might improve his French pronunciation. Mrs. Lefaure let him in on this evening with a cordial "*Bon soir*," and a volley of inquiries beginning with "*Pourquoi*," and relating to his reasons for not telling them that he was

going out to tea. But when she saw by the minister's puzzled look that he only half understood her rapidly spoken French, she broke into a good-natured laugh and began to talk in English with real Swiss volubility and vivacity. Whittaker answered as best he could in his absent frame of mind, and soon managed to evade the hail-storm of the good woman's loquacity by bidding the family good night and ascending to his room. He essayed, like a faithful and regular man that he was, to read a chapter in the Bible before going to bed, but he sat near the west window and kept looking off the book, at the moon now swimming low through the cloud-breakers near the western horizon. And he wondered what Roxy could have been thinking of when she was looking at the sky. He gave up the book presently and knit his brow. It was not love but finance that engaged his thought. How might an honorable man marry while his salary consisted chiefly of a pittance of two hundred dollars a year which the Home Missionary Society allowed him as a stipend for founding a feeble Presbyterian church in a village already blessed with a Baptist church and a Methodist—and that when the young man owed a debt of five hundred dollars incurred in getting his education, toward the liquidation of which he could manage now to put by just twenty-five dollars a year? This question puzzled him and rendered him abstracted while he was at his prayers; it kept him awake until long, long after the moon's shallop had made safe harbor behind the hills.

Roxy was not kept awake: she only delayed long enough to read her Bible and pray and to enter in her diary:

"Had a very refreshing conversation this evening with Mr. Whittaker about the remarkable experiences of Mrs. Edwards, and the holy lives of Lady Hunting-

ton, Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Fletcher. Oh, that the Lord would prepare me to do and suffer for Him in the same spirit!"

The outer form of this entry was borrowed no doubt from the biographies she read. But the spirit was Roxy's own.

CHAPTER VII.

TWONNET.

Mr. Whittaker carefully abstained from going often to Mr. Adams's after the evening of his conversation with Roxy. For at the breakfast table next morning Twonnet had turned the conversation to her friend. She spoke seriously—as seriously as *she* could—but there was mischief lurking in the twinkle of her black eyes as she praised Roxy and watched the minister's face, which was paler than usual this morning. Her Swiss tongue must go about something, and nothing excited her enthusiasm more than the virtues of Roxy Adams.

"She's perfection," said Twonnet with moderation. "She's just perfection, Mr. Whittaker, and nothing less."

"She seems a very nice girl indeed," said the minister guardedly; but his reserve only amused Twonnet all the more, for now she laughed that clear, ringing laugh that is characteristic of Swiss girls; while every brown curl on her head shook.

"*Qu'as-tu?*" said her father, reproachfully.

"Oh, let her laugh, Mr. Lefaure," said Whittaker; "Twonnet's fun is always good-natured; but to save my life I couldn't tell what she is laughing at."

"Because you said that Roxy was a very nice person, Mr. Whittaker. You could almost say that of me now, and I am nobody along side of Roxy; nobody but a——"

"A giggler," said the mother with a quiet chuckle, the wrinkles about the corners of her eyes showing plainly

that she had been what Twonnet was then. For a hearty chuckle is the old age of a giggle.

"I tell you what, Mr. Whittaker," said Twonnet, sipping her coffee and looking at the minister under her eyebrows, "Roxy is the kind of a person that people put in books. *Saint Roxy*, how would that sound?" This last was half soliloquy. "Roxy is the kind of person that would feel obliged to anybody who would give her a chance to be a martyr."

"*Toinette*," said the father, shaking his head, "*tais-toi!*" He was annoyed now because the younger children, seeing that Twonnet meant mischief, began to laugh.

"I'm not saying any harm," replied the daring girl, with roguish solemnity. "I only said that Roxy would like to be a martyr, and you think I mean that she would even marry a minister. I didn't say that."

The children tittered. Whittaker's pale face reddened a little, and he laughed heartily; but this time the father frowned and stamped his foot in emphasis of his sharp "*Tais-toi, Toinette, je te dis!*"

Twonnet knew by many experiments the precise limit of safe disobedience to her father. There was an implied threat in his "*Je te dis*," and she now reddened and grew silent with a look of injured innocence.

If Twonnet had had a lurking purpose to promote the acquaintance between Whittaker and Roxy Adams, she had defeated herself by her suggestion, for Whittaker hardly went near the old hewed-log house again in months. His foible was his honor, and one in his situation could not think of marriage, and, as he reasoned, ought not to make talk which might injure Roxy's interests if not his own. Twonnet was disappointed, and with her disappointment there was a lugubrious feeling that she had made a

mistake. She said no more about Roxy, but she continued to tease the minister gently about other things, just because it was her nature to tease. Once Whittaker had tried to talk with her, as became his calling, about religion; but she could not help giving him droll replies which made his gravity unsteady, and brought the interview to a premature close.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVIVAL.

THERE was a revival in the town. Do you know what that means? In a country village, where most of the time there is a stagnation even in gossip, where a wedding of any sort is a capital event, where a funeral is of universal interest, and where even a birth is matter of common talk, it is—all moral aspects of the case aside—a great thing to have a hurricane of excitement sweep over the still waters of the little pool. Every one of the fifteen hundred people in the little town knew that there was a revival "going on." Every one of them carried in his head each day a list of those who had "been to the mourner's bench" the night before, and of those who were converted; and everybody knew who had shouted or "taken on" in any way at the meetings. Forlorn groups of young men who looked as though the day of judgment were surely come, stood upon the street corners and discussed the fact that Bill Works had "gone forward" the evening before. Some thought he wouldn't "hold out long." But the morning after old Tom Walters "got religion," the town was convulsed with excitement. He was a notorious drunkard, and when he was converted there did seem something supernaturally awful about it. To see Tom sober was like seeing a dead man alive. Few were living now who could remember when Walters had been entirely sober before. There was many a man ready to assure you that he'd "seen a good many of these roar

ing excitements in his time," and that they "all died down afore hay-harvest," and "old Tom Walters would be drunker'n ever, time the corn crop was laid by." And yet, and yet, all this spoken in a voice a little tremulous did have an air of grave-yard whistling.

There were the scoffers, however, who laughed, and who banded together to laugh. The best man among them was Ben Thomas, who laughed in the preacher's face, when he was going through the congregation exhorting. The preacher, a slender Boanerges, had rebuked him from the pulpit, and this had given Ben a still greater prominence among his fellows. But when two of Ben's cronies, after a fiery and prophet-like denunciation from the preacher, became frightened, and came cowed and bellowing to the "mourner's bench," even Ben's voice grew a little tremulous as he saw himself the forlorn hope of the opposition. But all the thunders of the preacher could not bring him down. He was too much flattered by his unique position. It was better to be the devil than to be nobody in particular, and Ben would have faced perdition itself for the sake of gratifying his love of bravado.

All this storm was raised by the new Methodist preacher, a man who had been a mechanic until religion seized upon his enthusiastic spirit. Since that time he had been a blazing torch of religious excitement, sweeping like a prairie fire over every region to which the conference had assigned him. In the autumn, after the August election, he had been sent to Luzerne. In November, General Harrison and his log-cabin were elected to the presidency Now, the ebb tide of political or financial excitement often ends in becoming a flood tide of religious excitement. It is a resolution of force, not easily accounted for

but very easily seen. So that Mr. Dale's revival took on proportions surprising even to his faith and enterprise.

Mr. Whittaker was a New Englander, and to him this revival was something appalling. Not that he did not believe in revivals; but he believed in revivals like Dr. Payson's and Jonathan Edwards's—of the quiet, awful, and pervasive kind, which would not have been possible among the inflammable people on the Ohio in the last generation. Mr. Whittaker, believing that some good must be done in spite of the "wild-fire" thought it no more than right that he should attend the Methodist meetings. He could not do this in any spirit of patronage as he might have done in New England, for here the Methodists were more than half the town. Still he could not but feel that it would be a condescension for a college-bred man like himself to lend his countenance to these people whose minister had laid down his hatter's bow to become a preacher on an education consisting chiefly of a reading of Wesley's Sermons and Clarke's Commentary. He went one evening and did his best to get into sympathy with the meeting, but the loud praying, the constant interruptions of responsive "Amens" and other ejaculatory cries, the kneeling mourners weeping and sobbing, fifty at a time, in the space around the pulpit, the public prayer offered by women, the pathetic melodies and choruses, the occasional shouting—these and a hundred other things offended his prejudices and grated on his sense of propriety. He wondered how Roxy could seem oblivious to the din about her as she moved among the penitents on the women's side of the house, to comfort whom was her special vocation. He saw how everybody loved her, how the gladness of her face seemed to mollify the terribleness of Dale's fiery preaching. It happened

to be the very night of old Tom Walter's "start," and Whittaker saw that after the old man had wept and cried, lying prone upon the floor during the whole evening, he seemed not a little cheered by the words which sister Roxy spoke to him at the close of the meeting; not by the words perhaps, but by the radiant face and hopeful tone.

But Whittaker did not go again. How could he? To him this religious intoxication was profanation, and he wrote a strong letter to the Home Missionary Society setting forth the "wild and semi-barbarous character" of many of the religious services at the West, and urging the importance of sending men to plant "an intelligent and thoughtful Christianity" in its place. This was because he was an exotic. The religion which he despised was indigenous. A better and more thoughtful Christianity has grown as the people have grown thoughtful. But it has developed on the ground. It is not chiefly New England thoughtfulness, but the home growth of Western intelligence that has done it.

But though Whittaker washed his hands of this ranting revivalism he wished that he were free to dislike it wholly. Tom Walters, he reflected, would no doubt slip back into the mire as soon as the excitement was over, but in all this ingathering there must be some good grain. And so he found himself in that state which is least comfortable of all—his sympathy dividing the ground with his antipathy. And such is the solidarity of people in a village that an excitement of this sort is sure to affect everybody, sooner or later. Whittaker soon saw in his own congregation an unusual solemnity. He was unwilling to admit that the Methodist revival had influenced him, but he found himself appealing more earnestly than ever to his

few hearers to become religious. He found himself expecting something. What to do he did not know. At last he appointed an "Inquiry Meeting" at the close of his Sunday evening service. Just one person remained as an "inquirer." To Mr. Whittaker's amazement this was Twonnet. There were others a week later, but that the first should be the volatile Twonnet, whose gay banter and chaffer had made him afraid to speak to her seriously, quite upset him. After the inquiry meeting was over and he had seated himself alone in the little parlor at Mr. Lefaure's, where a melancholy ticking was kept up by an old Swiss clock screwed to the wall, with its weights and pendulum hanging exposed below, he looked into the blazing fire on the hearth and wondered how it was that Twonnet, who, at supper that very evening, had been as gay as ever, should have suddenly remained to an inquiry meeting. He tried to think what there was unusual in his sermon that might have impressed her.

Just then the brass knob of the door was turned hesitantly, the old-fashioned latch, big at one end and little at the other, was raised with a snap, and the door was opened a little way by Twonnet, who immediately began to close it irresolutely.

"Come in, Twonnet," said the minister gravely.

Thus reassured, Twonnet entered, took up the broom mechanically and swept the ashes on the hearth into the fire-place, set the broom down and stood haltingly by the fire.

"Sit down, Twonnet," said Whittaker gently, as though he were addressing a little child. "How long have you been thinking seriously about becoming a Christian?"

"Ever since I can remember."

"Yes, yes, but lately."

"All the time." Then after a pause, "I would like to be as good as Roxy, but I can't. I can't be serious long at a time, I'll be laughing and teasing somebody to-morrow, I suppose. That's the reason I haven't tried before. I can't be much of a Christian anyhow."

"But divine grace can help you," said Whittaker, using the form of words to which he had always been accustomed.

"But divine grace won't make me somebody else, will it? It won't make me like to look inside as Roxy does, and to keep diaries and all that. It won't make me want to be a martyr as she does, I'm sure. I'll never be good all over. It doesn't seem to make other people all alike, and I suppose I'll be the same giddy-headed Twonnet, as long as I live, and father will have to keep shaking his head and saying, '*Tais-toi, Toinette*,' in that awful way, forever. If I ever get to heaven, I'll laugh one minute and get mad the next," and at this she laughed in her sudden mercurial fashion.

The minister was silent. He was afraid to say anything that might discourage her. There was not a trace of cant or mimicry in her piety. But, on the other hand, it seemed to him that there was a strange lack of the seriousness which he had always been taught was the first step of a Christian life. The cool Saxon New Englander was trying to apply Puritan rules to one of a different race.

"But I thought," continued Twonnet, gravely, "that, if I couldn't be as good as I wanted to, I would just try to be as good as I could." And here she began to shed tears. "I thought that was the common-sense way. I've got a temper—all of us Swiss have. But then we don't

stay mad, and that's a good thing." Here she laughed again. "Any way, I'm going to do my best."

Mr. Whittaker thought it safe to approve of this last resolution, though the girl was a puzzle to him. This certainly was not an experience according to the common standard. He could not dissect it and label its parts with the approved scientific names.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEMBER FROM LUZERNE.

During this revival regret was often expressed, that Mark Bonamy was absent. If he were at home he might be converted, and his conversion would tell upon the other young men of the town. And then he might come to be a preacher. What a preacher he would make! He would doubtless become a famous presiding elder like John Strange or Allen Wiley. He might some day get to be a great bishop like Elijah Hedding. But he was away attending the session of the legislature. None regretted this more than his mother, a devout Methodist, who prayed day and night that the son who "had wandered into paths of worldly pleasure and ambition" might be "led to ground the arms of his rebellion and enlist under the banner of the cross."

As for Mark, his ambition seemed in a fair way to be gratified. For the first time the state government was in the control of the Whigs. He had happened to change just in time to come in on the rising wave, and all Luzerne recognized him now as destined to become a distinguished citizen. Some days before the time for the legislature to meet, Mark buckled on his leggings, packed his saddle-bags, and mounted his horse. He rode for four days through thick yellow clay, soft enough to let his horse sink down one or two feet at nearly every step, arriving late in the evening of the fourth day at Indianapolis, a straggling muddy village in a heavily wooded

morass. The newly projected capital had been laid off with true Hoosier magnificence and hopefulness. The governor's house—remarkable for a homely bigness and a dirty color—stood in the middle, surrounded by a circular street which left his excellency's family no back yard—all sides were front. Around this focus most of the new wooden churches were built, so that the people going to meeting might inspect the governor's wood-pile and count the inmates of his chicken-coop, whose death-warrants had not yet been signed. Outside of the "circle" the city was laid off with nice rectangularity, except that four great diagonal avenues running from the center gave the town, on the map, the appearance of a blazing sun in a cheap picture. Nowadays, when more than a hundred thousand people have filled up this radiant outline with many costly buildings, and when the unsightly "governor's mansion" having ceased to exist, no longer presents its back door to the Episcopal church, the beautiful Hoosier metropolis has justified the hopes of its projectors. But in Bonamy's time the stumps stood in the streets; the mud was only navigable to a man on a tall horse; the buildings were ugly and unpainted; the people were raw immigrants dressed in butternut jeans, and for the most part afflicted either with the "agur" or the "yaller janders"; the taverns were new wooden buildings with swinging signs that creaked in the wind, their floors being well coated with a yellow adobe from the boots of the guests. The alkaline biscuits on the table were yellow like the floors; the fried "middling" looked much the same, the general yellowness had extended to the walls and the bed-clothing, and combined with the butternut jeans and copperas-dyed linsey-woolsey of the clothes, it gave the universe an air of having the jaundice.

It is quite depressing to a man who has been the great man of his town, and who has been duly commissioned to some deliberative body, to find that all his fellow-members consider themselves the central objects of interest. Mark was neglected at first by all except those members who wanted to get state roads or other projects of local interest carried through the house. He was only "the young fellow from Luzerne." Nevertheless, after he had made his maiden speech on the necessity for internal improvements by the general government, he was more highly esteemed. A young man with so telling a style of declamation was not to be slighted. A shrewd old member nodded to his neighbor as Mark sat down at the close of his effort, and said, "Congress some day." For that was the day before the reign of newspapers. Declamation was the key to promotion.

One day when the session was drawing to its close, a messenger came for Bonamy. The man had ridden hard over frozen ground for two days, and now with horse worn out, he came to tell Mark that his mother was dying of one of those bilious fevers which made the West a graveyard in those days. Mark was a man of strong feeling. He had often disregarded the advice of his mother, but she was the good influence of his life, so that it was with a mixed emotion of grief and remorse that he mounted his horse and turned his back upon the legislature, then in its last week, to make a forced ride of eighty miles in two days over frozen roads of horrible roughness, with only the faintest hope of seeing his mother alive.

But Death does not wait for us. When Mark rode his tired horse up to his father's gate, the serious faces of those who met him at the door told that he was too late.

It only remained to receive her blessing at second-hand from the old women who had been with her to the last, and who gave her messages to Mark in a tone that seemed to say: "Now, you reprobate, you! don't you feel mean that you did not repent as your mother wanted you to? Now you see in a time like this how superior to you we pious people are; aha!" It is the persuasive way of some people—this crowing over a sinner. Mark wouldn't have taken a short step in the direction of Paradise, on any account just then.

His two sisters were full of sorrow, though Amanda, the elder, showed it in a severe and dignified way quite becoming in a Bonamy. Even Colonel Bonamy looked softened—just a little.

Mrs. Bonamy was buried after the village custom. The funeral tickets were distributed on the day of her death. The little printing-office conducted by the editor, publisher, proprietor, and printer of the "Weekly Palladium," and one small boy, kept a black ornamental border all set up for funeral tickets. The type of the set phrases, such as "Yourself and family are respectfully invited," were never distributed; the name, and date, and hour only were changed as occasion required. As soon as the tickets for Mrs. Bonamy's funeral were ordered, the printer set the form of the funeral ticket on the imposing-stone and proceeded to make the alterations needful to render it appropriate to the present occasion. He pulled it apart, placed the lines needing change in his composing-stick, took out the name of Job Raymond, the last deceased, and replaced it with Mrs. Bonamy's, changed the dates and other particulars, "justified" the lines, and then replaced them in the form, and proceeded to "lock it up." In a short time the small inky boy was rolling and the editor

was working off with an old hand-press little tickets much like this:

Yourself and family are respectfully invited to attend the funeral of OLIVIA W. BONAMY, from the residence of her husband, DANIEL K. BONAMY, on Wednesday, February 19th, 1841, at one o'clock P.M.

You will find many of these tickets laid away between the leaves of old books in Luzerne. When the proper number were printed, the inky, impish-looking lad made a feint of washing his hands, put on his round-about, and started out to distribute them, with the greater part of his face in appropriate mourning. He did not go to certain select families set down on a pre-arranged list. A small town is democratic; the tickets were left at every house, and you might have seen the village folks discussing the matter over their division fences. For people must discuss something—it is the great preventive of insanity. So now every symptom of Mrs. Bonamy's disease was gone over, and what Mrs. So-and-so said about it three days ago, and what the doctor thought, and when "the change" took place, and who were "sitting up the night she died," and whether she "died happy" or not, and what she said, and whether the corpse looked "natural," and how old she

was, and "what time Mark got home," and how he "took it," and how "the old colonel took it," and whether he would stay an infidel or not, and how Amanda "took it," and whether the girl had much heart or not, and whether the old man would marry again, and what he would do about his family, and whether Mark would get "under conviction" or not, and whether he would make a preacher if he was converted. But everybody was agreed that, coming just at this time, it was a "mighty solemn call" to Mark, and Jemima Dumbleton expressed herself very positively on this point. She said he needed a solemn call, "Fer that ere Mark Bonamy," she went on, "haint got no other god but Mark Bonamy. And worshipin' his self is mighty like bowin' down to a god of brass, or to Aaron's calf, so it seems to me."

The funeral took place like all the other village funerals of that day. First the minister preached a sermon of warning and consolation to the living, reviewing and eulogizing the life of the deceased. Then there was a procession, which included, beside the wagon on which the coffin rested, some old family carriages or carry-alls, several buggies, one gig, fifteen people from the country on horseback, and a long line afoot, with the usual number of stragglers and small boys, who ran alongside because it was a procession. These small boys reached the grave-yard in advance of the rest and perched themselves high on the fences, where they could see all that might take place. They were not noisy, though they showed much excitement—this was a spectacle, and any spectacle is a godsend to a village lad. Whether it is a muster, or a funeral, a circus, or a "baptizing," matters not to him,—so that something goes on and he sees it.

The coffin was lowered, the Methodist service was read

the grave was quickly filled and rounded up with the spades of kindly neighbors,—after which the minister said that he "was requested on behalf of the family of the deceased to thank the friends who had shown so much kindness during her illness." Then he pronounced the benediction, and the small boys leaped from the fences and hurried away pell-mell for the town, while the friends slowly dispersed, the wintry winds playing a pathetic requiem in the frozen and vibrant boughs of the clump of weeping willows which keep, even unto this day, a perpetual vigil over the graves of the village dead, while generation follows generation to the lonely sleeping-place.

It was some time during the next day that Mark Bonamy went to see Roxy Adams, to thank her for her faithful kindness to his mother, and receive some messages that the mother had left in the keeping of Roxy. In his present state of mind Mark was a little afraid of Roxy. But he was ill at ease in his conscience, and he gave himself much credit for submitting to Roxy's exhortations. It showed that he was not so very bad, after all.

Roxy did not take the lofty and patronizing stand he expected. There was something so strange and persuasive in the earnestness with which the eager girl spoke of his mother, something so touching in her enthusiastic appeals to his conscience through his natural affection, that Bonamy, who was full of sensibility, found himself strangely affected by it. He was always susceptible to female influence, but he found that Roxy called out what was best in him. He readily promised her that he would go to meeting that night, and he kept his word.

He expected to be touched by the absence of his mother, who had always been a prominent figure in the meetings. But there was so much change, that he did not feel his

mother's absence as he thought to feel it. The old, unpainted and unfenced, brick meeting-house with its round-top front windows and its fan-light over the door, was the same Within there were the same stiff benches with awkward backs consisting of two narrow boards far apart, the same unpainted pulpit with posts on either side supporting candles in brass candlesticks, the same rusty box-stove sitting in the middle of the aisle, and the same hanging tin chandeliers with candles at every stage of consumption. The same tall, kindly sexton, a man with one eye, went round as before, taking careful sight on a candle and then, when sure of his aim, suddenly snuffing it, gently parting the wick afterward to increase the light, then opening the stove door with a clatter and pushing in a piece of wood. It was all as of old, but all so different. The young men with whom Mark had had many a wild spree, sat no longer back near the door in the seat of the scornful but in the "amen corner;" the giddiest girls he had ever waltzed with were at this moment joining with Roxy and the rest in singing that plaintive melody:

> "Our bondage here shall end,
> By and by—by and by."

When one follows in the track of a storm one measures the force by the uprooted trees and the shattered branches. So Mark, seeing all at once the effects of the revival, felt that the town had been subjected to a fearful power, and the sense of this invisible power almost overwhelmed him. Then, too, he was as one who beholds all his friends sitting guests at a feast while he shivers without in cold and darkness. The preacher's words were evidently leveled at him. Dale knew, as all revivalists do, the value of natu

ral sensibility as a sort of priming for religious feeling; he touched with strong emphasis on "praying mothers," and "friends gone before," and on probable separations in the world to come, and Mark felt the full force of the whole tide of magnetic feeling in the audience turned on himself.

He sought diversion in looking about. But this was vain. Those who had not yet "made a start," looked full of grave apprehension. One or two stood like trees unscathed by the blast. Ben Thomas was as full of mockery as ever. He looked at Mark and nodded, saying:

"He means you, Mark. He loves a shining Mark! Ain't you under conviction yet?"

But his horrible scoffing at everything, which to anybody else seemed sacred, only reacted on Mark, and made him ready to put any gap between himself and Ben. Near Ben sat Major Tom Lathers, tall and stringy and solemn. He kept himself forever "in an interesting state of mind" in order that religious people might encourage him by furthering his political aims. Lathers made every church in the village believe that he "leaned toward" it, in preference to the others. He talked to the Methodists about his Methodist wife, "now dead and in heaven;" he told the Baptists about his "good Baptist bringing up," and spoke feelingly to the Presbyterians about his "good old Presbyterian grandmother," who taught him to say his prayers. Thus did this exemplary man contrive to keep in a perpetual bond of sympathy with his fellow-men, regardless of sect or creed. Had there been any Catholics and Jews in the town he would doubtless have discovered a Catholic ancestor somewhere, and a strong leaning toward Judaism on account of his lineal descent from Noah. Provided always that the said

Catholics and Jews had at the least filed a declaration of their intention to become citizens of this great republic.

Mark knew Lathers's hypocrisy and hated it. But what was his disgust when, catching the major's solemn eye and following its direction, he saw on the women's side of the church, decked out in cheap finery, Nancy Kirtley. She sat next the aisle and her splendid and self-conscious face was posed on purpose to attract his attention. She had come to town to spend two days at the house of her brother, the drayman, and had prolonged her stay when she heard that Mark had been sent for. She had not felt the revival excitement. Roxy had besought her, the minister had preached at her, the sisters had visited her. All this flattered and pleased her. She liked to be the center of attention, and she had managed on occasion to squeeze out a tear or two by way of encouraging the good people to keep up their visits. But for her—healthy, full-blooded, well-developed, beautiful animal—there was no world but this. Such people are enough to make one doubt whether immortality be a gift so generally distributed as we sometimes think. On this evening the radiant Nancy sat smiling among the solemn and even tearful people about her. Her shallow nature had no thought now for anything but her appearance and its probable effect on Mark.

Little did Nancy imagine what a goblin her face was to the young man. In his present state of mind she was the ghost of his former sins and weakness. The very attraction he found in her face startled him. So at last when he went forward to be prayed for, it was not altogether repentance, nor altogether a fear of perdition, even, but partly a desire to get out of the company in which he found himself. Mark was hardly a free agent. He was

a man of impulsive temperament. His glossy, black, curly hair and well-rounded, mobile face expressed this. In this matter he floated in on the tide, just as he would have floated out on an evil tide had the current set in the other direction.

That night Twonnet went home with Roxy. For how can girls be friends without sleeping together? Is it that a girl's imagination is most impressed by secrets told in the dark? I am not a girl; the secret of this appetency for nocturnal friendship is beyond me, but I know that when two girls become friends their favorite trysting place is sure to be the land of Nod. So Twonnet, having attended the Methodist meeting, went home with Roxy. And they discussed the "start" which Mark had made.

"I don't just like it," said the Swiss girl. "You see Mark is grieved by his mother's death; he is sorry in a general sort of a way that he didn't do as she wanted him to. But is he sorry for any particular sins? Now, when a body repents I don't believe in their saying, 'I'm sorry I'm a sinner.' When I can say, 'I am sorry that I get mad so quick and that I trouble other people,' then I repent. Now, if Mark could say, 'I'm sorry I was drunk on such a night, and that I gambled at such a time,' it would all be well enough."

"How do you know he can't?" asked Roxy, somewhat warmly. For Mark was a friend of hers, and now that his conversion was partly the result of her endeavor, she felt a sort of proprietary interest in his Christian life.

"I tell you what, Twonnet," she added with enthusiasm, "it's a grand thing to see a young man who has the glittering prizes of this world in his reach, bring all his splendid gifts and lay them as a sacrifice on the altar of the Lord, as Mark did to-night."

"You give Mark more credit than he deserves," persisted the uncharitable Twonnet, with a toss of her curls. "He didn't do anything very deliberately to-night. He felt bad at his mother's death and sorry that he had treated her badly. Wait till he actually gives up something before you praise him."

CHAPTER X.

THE EXHORTER.

But if friends overestimated the change in Mark it is quite certain that the critics were equally mistaken. For Mark converted was quite a different Mark. Even the scoffers had to admit so much. A man who finds his excitement in prayer-meetings and love-feasts is not the same with a man who finds his diversion in gaming and whisky and all-night dancing. He was not the same Mark; and yet, and yet, religion is only the co-efficient, and the co-efficient derives its value from that of the quantity, known or unknown, into which it is multiplied. Mark was different but quite the same.

Wicked or pious, he must lead. In politics he had shown himself self-confident, ambitious and fond of publicity. In religious affairs he was—let us use the other names for similar traits when they are modified by a noble sentiment—bold, zealous and eager for success.

He began to speak in meeting at once, for the Methodists of that day were not slow in giving a new convert opportunity to "testify." Indeed, every man and woman who became a Methodist was exhorted, persuaded, coaxed, admonished, if need be, until he felt himself all but compelled to "witness for Christ." If there was any hesitancy or natural diffidence in the way of a new beginner's "taking up the cross," brethren did not fail to exhort him in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs according

to the scripture. They would sing at him such words as these:

> "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord
> Or to defend his cause," etc.

Or,

> "Are there no foes for me to face?
> Must I not stem the flood?
> Is this vile world a friend to grace
> To help me on to God?"

It was a sharp discipline to which the convert was thus subjected. No very clear distinction was made between moral courage and mere effrontery, between natural diffidence and real cowardice. But this discipline made every one bear his share of responsibility. Methodism captured the West by mobilizing its whole force. In time of revival at least there were no reserves,—the whole *landwehr* was in action. Everybody must speak in meeting, or pray, or exhort, or "talk to mourners," or solicit the hesitating in the congregation personally. And so it came about that the clear, flexible voice of Mark Bonamy was heard in the meetings almost immediately. His addresses, if not eloquent, were at least striking and effective. The visible tokens of the influence of his addresses were pleasant to him,—there are few men to whom this sort of power would not be gratifying. Mark was active, he enjoyed the excitement, he liked to feel himself at last on the side of the right; he threw himself more and more into the work of exhorting, he went out of town frequently to address meetings in the country, and as he did not hesitate to brave storm or flood in these expeditions, he soon acquired a reputation for zeal which was quite agreeable to him, for it could not be expected that his natural vanity

should have all disappeared under the influence of his piety. For that matter our motives are never quite so good as we think, and never quite so bad as our enemies suppose. Our best is inwoven with evil, and our worst, let us hope, has some strands of good. Only God can unravel the complexity. Mark, for his part, did not attempt it. He was of too complacent a temper to go behind the popular verdict when that was so favorable as in the present case. He often confessed his depravity, his sinfulness, his unworthiness; but this old heresy that a man is all bad is the devil's own cloak under which one is always prone to hide specific sins.

Of course Mark's religiousness occasioned much gossip in the small political circles of the county. The sheriff, claiming to be intimate with Bonamy, was often inquired of about it.

"Well, you see," Lathers replied when the solution was demanded by a crony, "I don't think it's a sharp move. It makes friends and the like for Mark, and gives him the preachers and class-leaders and exhausters and what-ye-may-call-'ems. But you see he can't ride both horses with their heads and the like turned different ways. And it's the fellers that don't go to class-meetin' and the like that carries elections. How's Mark goin' it with them? Can't drink, can't dance—pshaw! it ain't the best card Mark had, and I don't see for my life what made him throw it. He ain't too smart at 'lectioneerin' and the like noways. Ef't hadn't been for me that dancin' so much with Nance Kirtley would 'a' tripped him last run; I laid myself out to save him from that scrape and lost votes and the like a-doin' it. And he don't appreciate it. But he don't come a-foolin' 'round me with his religion and goin's-on, and the like, I tell you, now."

Here the astute man took a good bite from a plug of tobacco. Then he expectorated awhile with a deadly, melancholy, meditative aim at the rusty grate.

"Liker'n not, now, I may do Mark injestice," he went on with a suspicious twinkle. "It may be one of them Methodist girls and the like he's after. But then he don't show no signs. That ain't like him. He's a plumb fool wher they's anything of that kind a-goin'. I can't make it out. I don't believe he kin nother! It's like the feller't had measles, and mumps, and janders, and cholery infan-tu-um all in one heap. 'I can't make it out,' says the doctor, 'but I'll give you a little of everything I've got in the pill-bags, and something'll hit the disease, may be.' I heard that the Kirtley girl had went forrerd and the like in one of the meetin's out on the crick. I know what tree she's a-barkin' up. It's like the man said about his dog. 'He's treed a bear,'' says he; 'he barks too big fer a 'coon.' Nothing but big game would make Nancy Kirtley put on the pious and the like."

If the sheriff erred in his estimate of Mark, he was more nearly right when it came to Nancy. To marry Mark Bonamy was more to her than heaven itself; for the bliss of heaven or any other joy long deferred made no impression on her. When Mark became religious she followed him. And her large-eyed beauty became yet more dazzling when she tried to appear religious. It made one hope that, after all, there might be a soul within. So long, indeed, as she said nothing, she was a picture of meditative wisdom, a very Minerva. But when she spoke, it was, after all, only Minerva's bird. Such was the enchantment of the great still eyes in her passively beautiful face, that after many shocking disil lusions brought about by the folly of her tongue, one was

sure to relapse again into a belief in her inspiration as soon as she became silent. I doubt if good John Kaspar Lavater himself could expound to us this likeness of absolute vacuity to deep thoughtfulness. Why do owls and asses seem so wise?

Nancy's apparent conversion was considered a great triumph. Wherever Mark went he was successful, and nearly everybody praised him. Mrs. Hanks, Roxy's well-to-do aunt, held forth to Jemima upon the admirable ability of the young man, and his great goodness and self-sacrifice in "laying all his advantages of talent, and wealth, and prospects at the foot of the cross."

"I tell what I think, Henriette," replied Jemima, with her customary freedom; "I think that's all fol-de-rol and twaddle-de-dee." Here she set her iron down with emphasis and raised her reddened face from her work, wiping the perspiration away with her apron. "I think it's all nonsense fer the brethren and sisters to talk that way, jest like as ef Mark had conferred a awful favor on his Creater in lendin' him his encouragement. Do you think it's sech a great thing to be Colonel Bonamy's son and a member of the Injeanny legislater, that God must feel mightily obleeged to Mark Bonamy fer bein' so kind as to let him save his immortal soul? Now, I don't," and here she began to shove her iron again. "You all 'll spile Mark by settin' him up on a spinnacle of the temple," she added, as she paused a moment to stretch out a shirt-sleeve, preparatory to ironing it

"Jemima," said Mrs. Hanks, "it's wicked to talk that way. You are always making fun of the gospel. I'm sure Mark's very humble. He calls himself the chief of sinners."

"I s'pose he does. That's nice to set himself up along

side of Paul and say: 'See, Paul and me was both great sinners.' That makes you think he's a-goin' to be like Paul in preachin'. But s'pose one of the brethren—brother Dale, now—was to say: 'Brother Bonamy, you're the biggest sinner in town. You're wuss'n ole Gatlin that went to penitenshry, an' you're wuss'n Bob Gramps that was hung.' D'you think he'd say, 'Amen, that's a fact'? But ef bein' the chief of sinners means anything, that's what it means."

"Jemima, I tell you, you're wicked. It's right to kill the fatted calf for the returning prodigal."

"Oh yes, I know," and Jemima wiped her face again "But I wouldn't kill all the calves on the place and then begin on the ye'rlin's so as to make him think it was a nice thing to be a prodigal. I'd be afraid the scamp would go back and try it over again."

And here Jemima broke out with her favorite couplet:

> "Oh, hender me not, fer I will serve the Lord,
> And I'll praise him when I die."

Mark did find the attention which his piety brought him very pleasant, and indeed his new peace with himself made him happy. His cup would have been full of sweetness if it had not been for the one bitter drop. Nancy would follow him. Wherever he held meetings she availed herself of the abounding hospitality of the brethren to pursue him. She boasted a little, too, of her acquaintance with Brother Bonamy before his conversion. She received much attention on account of her friendship for him. But Mark's worst trouble was that he could not emancipate himself from her. She attracted him. Struggle as he might with the temptation, her exceeding fairness was a continual snare to his thoughts

It humbled him, or at least annoyed him, to remember that while all the world thought him a saint, he could not but feel a forbidden pleasure in looking on one, to attach himself to whom would be certain overthrow to all plans for goodness or usefulness. Did there also dawn upon the mind of Mark, unaccustomed as it was to self-analysis, the thought that this passion for Nancy had nothing to do with what was best in him? Did he ever reflect that it had no tinge of sentiment about it? Certain it is that he struggled with it, after a fashion; but his attempts to extinguish it, as is often the case, served to fan it into something like a flame; for such passions are not to be fought—when one fights one thinks, and thought is oil to the flame. They are to be extinguished by the withdrawal of fuel; to be eliminated by substitution of serious purposes. Mark prayed against his passion; reflected wisely on the folly of it; did everything but what he ought to have done. He perpetually hid from himself that his conversations with Nancy on the subject of religion were sources of nothing but evil to himself and to her. Was she not a convert of his own labors? Should he not do what he could to strengthen her purpose to do right?

About this time Dr. Ruter's missionaries in Texas had attracted much attention, and Mark thought of joining them. He would thus undertake a hard thing, and Mark was in the humor of doing something Herculean. He spurned the idea that he was to settle himself to the ordinary and unpoetic duties of life, or that, if he should become a preacher he could be content with doing only what commonplace circuit-riders did. In a general sort of way without wishing for specific martyrdom, he would have liked to brave wild beasts or persecutions. Most of us

would be willing to accept martyrdom in the abstract,—to have the glory and self-complacency of having imitated Paul, without having our heads specifically beaten with specific stones in the hands of specific heathen, or our backs lacerated with Philippian whips on any definitely specified day.

Bonamy had caught the genuine Methodist spirit, however, and being full of enterprise and daring he was ready for some brave endeavor. Perhaps, too, he found a certain relief in the thought that a mission of some kind would carry him away from the besetment of Nancy, who had lately persuaded him to give her his pocket-testament as an assistance to her religious life.

At any rate, it was soon noised that Bonamy was going to do something. The rumor was very vague; nobody knew just what the enterprise of the young Methodist was to be. Texas, and even Mexico, was mentioned; Choctaw Indians, the Dakota mission and what not, were presently woven into the village gossip.

Colonel Bonamy debated in himself, how he should defeat this scheme. As a lawyer he was accustomed to manage men. He had but two ways: the one to play what he called "bluff,"—to sail down on his opponent and appall him by a sudden display of his whole armament; the other was a sort of intellectual ambuscade. With Mark, who had always been under authority, he chose the first. It is not pleasing to parental vanity to have to take roundabout courses.

"Mark," said the old colonel, as the young man entered his office, "sit down there," and he pointed to a chair.

This was a sign of coming reproof. Mark had been so much flattered by the Whigs on the one hand and his religious associates on the other, that he did not quite like

this school-boy position. He seated himself in the chair indicated. The old gentleman did not begin speech at once. He knew that when "bluff" was to be played a preliminary pause and a great show of calmness on his part would tend to demoralize the enemy. So he completed the sentence he was writing, gathered up his papers and laid them away. Then he turned his chair square around toward his son, took off his glasses, stroked the rough, grizzled beard of three days' growth on his chin, and fastened his eyes on Mark.

"What is the use of being an infernal fool?" said the old man. "I let you take your own course in politics. I didn't say anything against your being a little unsteady; I was a young man myself once and sowed some wild oats. I knew you would settle after a while. But I never was such a confounded fool as you! To let a set of shouting old women and snooping preachers set you off your head till you throw away all your chances in life, is to be the plaguedest fool alive. Now, I tell you, by godamity, Mark Bonamy, that if you go to Texas you may go to the devil, too, for all of me. I'll cut you out of every red cent. I don't waste my money on a jackass, sir. That's all."

The old man had by this time wrought himself into a real passion. But he had mistaken Mark's temper. He was no more a man to yield to threats than his father. Many a man with less heart for martyrdom than Mark can burn at the stake when his obstinacy is aroused.

"Keep your money, I don't want it," he said contemptuously, as he strode out of his father's office, mentally comparing himself to Simon Peter rejecting the offer of Simon Magus.

He was of a temper quite earnest enough to have made more real sacrifices than the giving up of a reversionary

interest in an estate between him and the possession of which there stood the vigorous life of his father. But the apparent sacrifice was considerable, and it was much extolled. Roxy in particular was lost in admiration of what seemed to her unchecked imagination a sublime self-sacrifice. She rejoiced humbly in the part she had taken in bringing Mark to a religious life, while she estimated the simplicity and loftiness of his motives by the nobleness of her own. And, indeed, Mark's missionary purpose was in the main a noble one.

TWONNET AND ROXY TELLING FORTUNES.

CHAPTER XI.

DIVINING CUPS.

INTENSE excitements cannot endure. It is a "merciful provision." Human nature strained too long in any direction must find repose in relaxation or change in reaction. As the white heat of the political excitement of "the campaign of '40" had cooled off, so now the revival excitement slowly but surely subsided. There were brethren unversed in the philosophy of human nature who did not know that after the summer heat of religious excitement a hibernation is needful and healthy, and who set themselves to prevent the cooling, or the "backsliding" as they termed it. But the ebb tide was too strong for them, they were caught in it themselves, tired nature overstrained in one direction sank into torpor, in them as well as in others. Doubtless this period of reaction was worth quite as much as the period of revival. The winnowing went on rapidly now; the good folks were greatly alarmed to see how much of what they had raked together was mere chaff; but ever as the wind drove away the chaff, the solid grain became visible.

Among those who proved steadfast was the young lawyer. He did not go out to exhort so much in meetings as before, but then it was corn-planting time and meetings were no longer common in the country. He gave attention to his business, but it was still understood that he meditated some dreadful mission to some outlandish place, Oregon or Texas or Guinea—gossips were divided about

the exact locality—it was away off in that direction somewhere. Mark talked less about it now, and was not quite so sure of his own mind in the matter as he had been, except while talking to Roxy. He grew more and more fond of talking to Roxy. In conversation with her it was the better Mark who spoke. The lower, the passionate, the vacillating Mark was quite put out of sight. Roxy called out his best, and put him in conceit with himself All that was highest in her transferred itself somehow to him, and he was inclined to give himself credit for originating the impulses with which she inspired him. He liked to look at himself shining in the light of her reflected enthusiasm. She had set up an ideal Mark Bonamy, and the real Mark was so pleased to look at this flattering picture in the mind of the pure-hearted girl, that he came to believe the image of himself which he saw there to be an accurate likeness.

Of course interviews so frequent and so pleasant must grow to something more. It doesn't matter what a young man and a young woman talk about, even sympathetic conversations about missionary labors in Texas or in Greenland are apt to become tender. One enthusiasm translates itself so easily into another! This worship of his real and imaginary goodness, and this stimulus of what was best in him was so agreeable to Bonamy that he began to doubt whether after all it was best to undertake a mission to the Texans single-handed and alone. Good old sisters whose match-making proclivities had not died but had only been sanctified, took occasion to throw out hints on the subject, which greatly encouraged Mark to believe that Roxy was divinely intended and molded to be his helpmate in that great, vast, vague enterprise which should be worthy of the large abilities he had consecrated.

Roxy on her part was a highly imaginative girl. Here was a large-shouldered, magnificent, Apollo-like fellow, who thought himself something wonderful, and whom his friends thought wonderful. It was easy to take him at the popular estimate, and then to think she had discovered even more than others saw in him. For was it not to her that he revealed his great unsettled plans for suffering and dying for the cross of Christ? And as he came more and more, the pure-spirited girl began to long that she might somehow share his toils and sufferings. The ambition to do some heroic thing had always burned in her heart, and in her it was a pure flame with no taint of selfishness or egotism.

Mark went into Adams's shop one day to have his boots mended.

"So you are going to Texas, are you?" broke out the shoe-maker, with half-suppressed vehemence.

"Yes."

"Fool's errand—fool's errand," muttered the old man as he turned the boots over to look at the soles. Then he looked furtively at Bonamy and was disappointed to find in his face no sign of perturbation. "Fool's errand, I say," sharper than before.

Mark tossed back his black hair, and said with a twinkle:

"So you think, no doubt."

"Think? *think?*" Here the shoe-maker choked for utterance. "I tell you if you were my son I'd —— " then he went on turning the boots over and left the sentence unfinished. Perhaps because he could not think what he would do to such a strapping son as Mark; perhaps because the sentence seemed more frightful in this mysterious state of suspended animation than it could have done with any conceivable penalty at the end.

"You'd spank me and not give me any supper, may be," said Mark, who was determined to be good-natured with Roxy's father.

The old man's face did not relax.

"That shoe needs half-soling," he said, ferociously. "What makes you run your boots down at the heel?"

"To make business lively for the shoe-makers."

"And what'll you do when you get to Texas where there are no shoe-makers? I wish I could patch cracked heads as easy as cracked shoes."

Adams was not averse to Mark's flattering attentions to Roxy, to which he had attached a significance greater than Mark had intended or Roxy suspected. Missionary fever would soon blow over perhaps, and then Mark was sure to "be somebody."

Besides, the shoe-maker was himself meditating a marriage with Miss Moore. Her sign hung next to his own on Main street, and read, "Miss Moore, Millinery and Mantua-maker." Adams may have guessed from the verbal misconstruction of the sign, that the mantua-maker was as much in the market as the millinery; but at least he had taken pity on her loneliness and Miss Moore had "felt great sympathy for" his loneliness, and so they were both ready to decrease their loneliness by making a joint stock of it. Adams, thinking of marriage himself, could not feel unkind toward a similar weakness in younger people.

There was, however, one person who did not like this growing attachment between Mark Bonamy and Roxy Adams. Twonnet had built other castles for her friend. She was not sentimental, but shrewd, practical, matter-of-fact—in short she was Swiss. She did not believe in Mark's steadfastness. Besides, her hero was Whittaker,

whose serious excellence of character was a source of perpetual admiration in her. She was fully conscious of her own general unfitness to aspire to be the wife of such a man; she had an apprehension that she abode most of the time under the weight of the minister's displeasure, and she plainly saw that in his most kindly moods he treated her as one of those who were doomed to a sort of perpetual and amiable childhood. It was by no great stretch of magnanimity, therefore, that Twonnet set herself to find a way to promote an attachment between Whittaker and Roxy. Next to her own love affair a girl is interested in somebody else's love affair.

But Twonnet saw no way of pushing her design, for Whittaker carefully abstained from going to Adams's house. Twonnet beguiled Roxy into spending evenings at her father's. Whittaker, on such occasions, took the dispensations of Providence kindly, basking in the sunlight of Roxy's inspiring presence for a few hours, and lying awake in troubled indecision the entire night thereafter. It was with an increase of hope that Twonnet saw the mutual delight of the two in each other's society, and she was more than ever convinced that she was the humble instrumentality set apart by Providence to bring about a fore-ordained marriage. She managed on one pretext or another to leave them alone at times in the old-fashioned parlor, with no witness but the Swiss clock on the wall, the tic-tac of whose long, slow pendulum made the precious moments of communion with Roxy seem longer and more precious to the soul of the preacher. But nothing came of these long-drawn seconds of conversation on indifferent topics—nothing ever came but sleepless nights and new conflicts for Whittaker. For how should he marry on his slender salary and with his education yet

unpaid for? After each of these interviews contrived by Twonnet, the good-hearted maneuverer looked in vain to see him resume his calls at the house of Mr. Adams. But he did not. She could not guess why.

One night Twonnet spent with Roxy. Mark came in, in his incidental way, during the evening, but he did not get on well. The shrewd Twonnet got him to tell of his electioneering experiences, and contrived to make him show the wrong side of his nature all the evening. Roxy was unhappy at this, and so was Mark, but Twonnet felt a mischievous delight in thus turning Mark aside from talking about Roxy's pet enthusiasms, and in showing them the discords which incipient lovers do not care to see.

The girls sat at the breakfast-table a little late the next morning—late in relation to village habits, for it was nearly seven o'clock. Twonnet proposed to tell fortunes with coffee-grounds, after the manner of girls. Roxy hesitated a little; she was scrupulous about trifles, but at Twonnet's entreaty she reversed her cup to try the fortune of her friend.

"I don't see anything, Twonnet, in these grounds," she said, inspecting the inside of her cup, "except—except—yes—I see an animal. I can't tell whether it's a dog or a mule. It has a dog's tail and mule's ears. What does that mean?"

"Pshaw! you aren't worth a cent, Roxy, to tell fortunes," and with that Twonnet looked over her shoulder. "Dog's tail! why that's a sword, don't you see. I am to have a gentleman come to see me who is a military man."

"But will he carry his sword up in the air that way as if he were going to cut your head off if you should refuse him?" asked Roxy, "and what about these ears?"

"Ears! that is beastly, Roxy. Those are side-whiskers Now, see me tell your fortune."

With this, Twonnet capsized her cup in the saucer and let it remain inverted for some seconds, then righting it again she beheld the sediment of her coffee streaked up and down the side of the cup in a most unintelligible way. But Twonnet's rendering was fore-determined.

"I see," she began, and then she paused a long time, for in truth it was hard to see anything. "I see——"

"Well, what?" said Roxy, "a dog's tail or side-whiskers?"

"I see a young man, rather tall, with curly hair and —and broad shoulders." Twonnet now looked steadily in the cup, and spoke with the rapt air of a Pythoness. Had she looked up she would have seen the color increasing in Roxy's cheeks. "But his back is turned, and so I see that you will reject him. There are crooked lines crossing his figure by which I perceive it would have been a great source of trouble to you had you accepted him. There would have been discord and evil."

Here Roxy grew pale, but Twonnet still looked eagerly in the cup.

"I see," she continued, "a tall, serious man. There is a book in front of him. He is a minister. The lines about him are smooth and indicate happiness. His face is toward me and I perceive—that——"

But here Roxy impatiently wrested the cup from her hand and said, "Shut up, you gabbling story-teller!" Then looking in the cup curiously, she said, "There's nothing of all that there. Just a few streaks of coffee-grounds."

"May be you spoiled it," said the gypsy Twonnet. "You cannot read your own destiny. I read it for you."

"And I read yours," said Roxy; "an animal with a dog's tail and mule's ears. But don't let's talk any more nonsense, Twonnet, it's a sin."

"More harm comes of religious talk sometimes than of fooling," retorted Twonnet.

"What do you mean?" demanded Roxy, with anger and alarm.

But Twonnet did not answer except by a significant look from her black eyes. The girls had changed places for a time. It was Twonnet who had taken the lead.

CHAPTER XII.

WHITTAKER'S SHIP COMES IN

Poverty is always superstitious, if we may believe the Bonhomme Béranger, and Whittaker, driven to and fro between a growing love for Roxy Adams and an honest sense of obligation to pay for his education, had one superstition. His father had, four years before, invested all his small savings in a whaling vessel sailing out of the port of New Bedford. News had come from the Arctic seas which led to the belief that the ship was lost. Distress at the loss of his property, with the superadded grief of losing his wife soon after, had caused the death of Whittaker's father. But the son had never been quite convinced that the "Petrel" had gone down. And now he even dreamed at night of the "Petrel," weather-worn but richly laden, sailing into New Bedford harbor with Roxy on her prow, while he stood in the crowd of rejoicing stockholders, anxious friends of sailors, curious idlers, on the busy pier watching her return. But the "Petrel" never, except in Whittaker's dreams, floated again over the waters of Buzzard's Bay. He hoped in vain for his dividend, and the weary wives of sailors on the "Petrel" waited in vain for husbands whose grave-stones were the icebergs.

But if the "Petrel" did not come, another ship did. The rich and childless deacon, who out of his large means had lent young Whittaker enough to finish his education for the ministry, died, and remembering that notes

and bonds could not add to his comfort in heaven, he willed to his beneficiary the amount of his debt. On the very morning of Twonnet's fortune-telling Whittaker had gone feverishly to the village post-office in the back part of a dry goods store, to look for the letter that should bring him news of the "Petrel." He readily paid the thirty-seven and a half cents postage on a letter from his brother, and opened it eagerly to read, not the return of the "Petrel," but the death of Deacon Borden and his own release from bondage. I am afraid that his joy at his deliverance from debt exceeded his sorrow at the death of his benefactor. He would now carry out a plan which he had lately conceived of starting a school, for there was no good one in the village. The two hundred dollars a year which this would bring, added to his two hundred from the Home Missionary Society and the one hundred of salary from the church, would be ample for his support and that of a wife.

He was so elated that he could not quite keep his secret. He had gotten into a habit of talking rather freely to Twonnet. Her abundant animal spirits were a relief to his sobriety, and he had observed that her regard for him was kindly and disinterested. So with his letter full of news, he began to walk the upper piazza, waiting for the blithe Twonnet to come out, for she had returned home and was now, as she "made up" the beds, singing and chatting to her younger sisters half in French and half in English. In circumstances such as his, one *must* talk to somebody. Once he paused in his pacing to and fro and looked off at the deep green of the Kentucky hills, overlaid by a thin blue atmospheric enamel; he looked through the grape-vines which over-clambered the upper piazza, to the great, peaceful current of the Ohio, flowing steadily

in a majestic stillness;—a placid giant is that river;—he listened to the red-bird in a neighboring cherry-tree pouring out an ecstasy of amorous song to his mate, as he leaped joyously from bough to bough; and he, the grave, severe young minister, rejoiced in hills, and sky, and river and singing birds, half reproaching himself all the time for being so happy and feeling like a good boy that, under some impulse quite irresistible, has suddenly played truant.

Twonnet was long in appearing and Mr. Whittaker resumed his pacing to and fro, glancing every now and then at the hills and the river, and listening in a dreamy way to the delicious melody of the red-bird and the occasional soft cooing of a turtle-dove whose nest was in an apple-tree just beyond the garden fence. At last Twonnet came out on the piazza—or porch, as they call it in Indiana—and Whittaker told her, with what solemnity he could, of the death of the old deacon, and then of his own good fortune.

"I'm glad," said Twonnet, beginning to guess what had kept Whittaker from visiting Roxy.

"Glad the deacon's dead?" queried Whittaker, smiling.

"I do not know your friend and I can't be very sorry for him. But I do know you and I am glad, since he must die, that he was good enough to give you your debt. It shows he was prepared to go, you see, so my pleasure is quite religious and right," and she laughed roguishly. "Besides, you don't seem heart-broken about it, and ——" but here she checked herself, seeing that she had given pain.

"I am afraid I have been selfish," said Whittaker,—all the gladness had gone now,—"but you don't know what

a nightmare this debt has been. I don't wonder that debt makes men criminals—it hardens the heart."

"Well, Mr. Whittaker, if he had wanted you to feel sorry when he had gone, he ought to have given you the money while he was alive," said Twonnet, lightly. Then she started away, but looked back over her shoulder to say teasingly, "Now, Mr. Whittaker, you'll go to see somebody, I'll bet."

"Twonnet," he called after her, and when she had stopped he asked: "Is there any reason why I shouldn't go to see somebody?"

"Of course not. Every reason why you should go right off. You are not too late, but you will be if you wait." This last was said with the old bantering tone, and Whittaker looked after her as she disappeared, saying to himself:

"A splendid girl. Pity she is so giddy."

After mature reflection lasting fifteen minutes, he decided to call on Roxy Adams that very afternoon. He had not understood Twonnet's warning, but some apprehension of grave disaster to his new-born hope, and the nervousness of an austere man who has not often found duty and inclination coincident, made him in haste to forestall any misadventure. He ate but little dinner, not even enjoying his favorite dish of dandelion greens cooked in good Swiss fashion. Mr. Lefaure watched anxiously and at last inquired with earnestness:

"*Est-ce que vous ne vous portez pas bien, Monsieur?*"

But Whittaker smiled and assured the host that he was well, but had no appetite.

Twonnet, at last, solemnly told her father that Mr. Whittaker had received a letter that very morning informing him of the death of an old friend, and this infor-

"THE OTHER WAY!" CRIED THE MISCHIEVOUS VOICE OF TWONNET.

mation tallied so little with the expression on the minister's face that Twonnet's father was quite suspicious that the girl was playing one of her little pranks on him. But when he looked again at Whittaker's face it was serious enough.

After dinner the minister tried to get ready with great deliberation. By severe constraint he compelled himself to move slowly, and to leave the little front gate of palings, painted black atop, in a direction opposite to that which his feet longed to take.

"The other way," cried the mischievous voice of Twonnet, from behind a honeysuckle which she affected to be tying up to its trellis.

"Presently," replied he, finding it so much easier not to keep his secret, and pleased with Twonnet's friendly sympathy. But that word, spoken to her half in tenderness, pierced her like an arrow. A sharp pang of jealousy and I know not what, shot through her heart in that moment ; the sunshine vanished from her face. She had accomplished her purpose in sending Mr. Whittaker to Roxy, and now her achievement suddenly became bitter to her. She ran upstairs and closed her door and let down the blind of green slats, then she buried her head in the great feather pillows and cried her eyes red. She felt lonely and forsaken of her friends. She was mad with the minister and with Roxy.

But Whittaker walked away in the sunlight full of hope and happiness.

CHAPTER XIII

A WEATHER-BREEDER.

Peeps into the future are depressing. Twonnet's gypsy gift did not raise Roxy's spirits. By means of divination she had suddenly found, not exactly that she was in love with Mark, but that she was in a fair way to love him. It was painful, too, to know that all the joy she had had in talking with Bonamy was not as she had thought it, purely religious and disinterested. Her sensitive conscience shuddered at the thought of self-deception, and she had been in this case both deceiver and dupe. She had little belief in Twonnet's gift of prophecy but much in her shrewd insight. Was it true, then, that the great, brilliant and self-sacrificing Mark loved her? This thought would have been enough to plunge her into doubt and questionings. But Twonnet's evident distrust of her hero vexed and perturbed her. And then to have her other hero suddenly thrown into the opposite scale drove her into a tangle of complex feelings. How did Twonnet know anything about Mr. Whittaker's feeling toward her? Was it likely that he would want to marry a Methodist?

Alas! just when her life was flowing so smoothly and she seemed to be able to be useful, the whole stream was suddenly perturbed by cross-currents and eddies, and she was thrown into doubts innumerable. Prayer did not seem to do any good; her thoughts were so distracted that devotion was impossible. This distraction and de

pression seemed to her the hiding of the Lord's face. She wrote in her diary on that day :

> "I am walking in great darkness. I have committed some sin and the Lord has withdrawn from me the light of his countenance. I try to pray, but my thoughts wander. I fear I have set my heart on earthly things. What a sinner I am. Oh Lord ! have mercy ! Leave me not in my distress. Show me the right way, and lead me in paths of righteousness for thy name's sake."

The coming of Whittaker that afternoon added to her bewilderment. She did her best to receive him with composure and cordiality, but Twonnet's prophecy had so impressed her beforehand with the purpose of his visit that she looked on him from the first in doubt, indecision and despair. And yet her woman's heart went out toward him as he sat there before her, gentle, manly, unselfish and refined. It was clear to her then that she *could* love him. But thoughts of Mark Bonamy and his mission intruded. Had Whittaker come a week or two earlier !

While the minister talked, Roxy could not control her fingers at her knitting. Her hands trembled and refused to make those motions which long since had become so habitual as to be almost involuntary. There was one relief ; Bobo sat alongside of her and the poor fellow grew uneasy as he discovered her agitation. She let fall her knitting and pushed the hair from the boy's inquiring face, lavishing on him the pity she felt for her suitor, speaking caressing words to him, which he caught up and repeated like an echo in the tones of tenderness which she used. Whittaker envied the perpetual child these caresses and the pitying love which Roxy gave him. Roxy was much moved by Whittaker's emotion. Her pitiful

heart longed not so much to love him for her own sake as to comfort him for his sake. Some element of compassion must needs have been mingled with the highest love of which she was capable.

The minister came to the love-making rather abruptly. He praised her and his praises were grateful to her, he avowed his love, and love was very sweet to her, but it was when, having exhausted his praises and his declarations he leaned forward his head on his hand, and said, "Only love me, Roxy, if you can," that she was deeply moved. She ceased her caresses of the boy and looked out of the window in silence, as though she would fain find something there that might show her a way out of the perplexities into which her life had come. Bobo, in whose mind there was always an echo, caught at the last words, and imitating the very tone of the minister, pleaded:

"Only love me, Roxy, if you can."

This was too much for the girl's pent-up emotions, she caught the lad and pressed him in her arms eagerly, saying or sobbing:

"Yes, I will love you, Bo, God bless you!"

She had no sooner relaxed her hold than the minister, in whose eyes were tears, put his own arm about the simple lad and embraced him, much to the boy's delight. This act, almost involuntary as it was, touched Roxy's very heart. She was ready in that moment to have given herself to the good man.

But again she looked out of the window, straining her eyes in that blind, instinctive, searching stare, to which we are all prone in time of perplexity. There was nothing without but some pea-vines, climbing and blossoming on the brush which supported them, a square bed of lettuce, and a hop-vine clambering in bewildering luxuriance

over the rail fence. The peaceful hen-mother, troubled by no doubts or scruples, scratched diligently in the soft earth, clucking out her content with a world in which there were plenty of angle-worms, and seeming in her placidity to mock at Roxy's perturbation. Why should all these dumb creatures be so full of peace? Roxy had not learned that internal conflicts are the heritage of superiority. It is so easy for small-headed stupidity to take no thought for the morrow.

But all that Roxy, with her staring out of the window, could see was that she could not see anything at all.

"Will you tell me, Miss Adams," asked the minister, presently, "whether I am treading where I ought not—whether you are engaged?"

"No, I am not." Roxy was a little startled at his addressing her as "Miss Adams." For in a western village the Christian name is quite the common form of speech to a young person.

There was another long silence, during which Roxy again inquired of the idle-looking pea-vines, and the placid hen, and the great, green hop-vine clambering over the fence. Then she summoned courage to speak:

"Please, Mr. Whittaker, give me time to think—to think and pray for light. Will you wait—wait a week—or so? I cannot see my way."

"I cannot see my way," put in Bobo, pathetically.

"Certainly, Roxy. Good-bye!"

She held out her hand, he pressed it but without looking at her face, put on his hat, and shook hands with little Bobo, whose sweet infantile face looked after him wistfully.

He was gone and Roxy sighed with relief. But she had only postponed the conflict.

The minister, who had carried away much hope, met Mr. Adams in the street, and, partly because he felt friendly toward everybody and toward all connected with Roxy in particular, he stopped to talk with him; and he in turn was in one of his most contrary moods, and took pains to disagree with the preacher about everything.

"It is a beautiful day," said Whittaker at last, as he was saying good-bye, resolved perhaps to say one thing which his friend could not controvert.

"Yes, nice day," growled Adams, "but a weather-breeder."

This contradictoriness in the shoe-maker took all the hopefulness out of Whittaker. The last words seemed ominous. He returned home dejected, and when Twonnet essayed to cheer him and to give him an opportunity for conversation by saying that it was a beautiful day, he startled himself by replying, with a sigh:

"Yes, but a weather-breeder."

CHAPTER XIV.

CARPET-RAGS AND RIBBONS.

"It seems to me ——"

It was Mrs. Henrietta Hanks speaking to her faithful Jemima on the day after the events recorded in the previous chapter of this story. Jemima and her mistress were cutting up all manner of old garments and sewing them into carpet-rags, while Bonaparte Hanks, whose name is better known to our readers in its foreshortened form as Bobo, was rolling the yellow balls of carpet-rags across the floor after the black ones, and clapping his hands in a silly delight.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Hanks, "that Mark and Roxy will make a match of it."

"Umph," said Jemima. She did not say "umph,"—nobody says that; but she gave forth one of those guttural utterances which are not put down in the dictionary. The art of alphabetic writing finds itself quite unequal to the task of grappling with such words, and so we write others which nobody ever uses, such as *umph* and *eh* and *ugh*, as algebraic signs to represent the unknown quantity of an expressive and perhaps unique objurgation. Wherefore, let "umph," which Jemima did not say, equal the intractable, undefinable, not-to-be-spelled word which she did use. And that undefinable word was in its turn an algebraic symbol for a whole sentence, a formula for general, contemptuous, and indescribable dissent.

"He goes there a good deal," replied Mrs. Hanks, a little subdued by Jemima's mysterious grunt.

"I thought he'd made a burnt sackerfice of hisself and laid all on the altar, and was agoin' off to missionate among the Texicans," said Jemima, prudently reserving her heavier shot to the last, and bent on teasing her opponent.

"Well, I don't imagine that'll come to anything," said Mrs. Hanks. "Young Christians in their first love, you know, always want to be better than they ought, and I don't think Mark ought to throw away his great opportunities. Think how much good he might do in Congress; and then, you know, a Christian congressman is such an ornament—to—to the church."

"An' to all his wife's relations besides," chuckled the wicked Jemima. "But for my part, I don't 'low he's more'n a twenty-'leventh part as good as Roxy. She's jam up all the time, and he's good by spells and in streaks —one of the fitty and jerky kind."

"Jemima, you oughtn't to talk that way." Mrs. Hanks always pitted her anger and her slender authority against Jemima's rude wit. "You don't know but Mark 'll come to be my nephew, and you ought to have more respect for my feelings."

"They haint no immegiate danger of *that*," answered Jemima, with emphasis. "He *may* come to be your nephew *to* be sure, and the worl' may stop off short all to wunst and come to a eend by Christmas. But neither on 'em's likely enough to make it wuth while layin' awake to think about it."

"How do *you* know?"

"Well, I went over arter Bobo yesterday evenin',* an what d'ye think I see?"

* "Evening," in the Ohio valley and in the South, is used in its primary sense of the later afternoon, not as in the eastern states, to signify the time just after dark.

Mrs. Hanks did not inquire, so Jemima was obliged to proceed on her own account.

"I see Mr. Whittaker a-comin' out of the house, with his face all in a *flash*, like as ef he'd been a-talkin' sumpin pertikular, an' he spoke to me kinder shaky and trimblin like. An' when I come in, I see Roxy's face sort a red and white in spots, and her eyes lookin' down and to one sides, and anywheres but straight,—kinder wander'n' roun' onsartain, like's ef she wus afeared you'd look into 'em and see sumpin you hadn't orter."

"Well, I *do* declare!" Whenever Mrs. Hanks found herself entirely at a loss for words and ideas she proceeded after this formula to *declare*. She always declared that she did declare, but never declared what she declared.

"Well, I *do* declare!" she proceeded after a pause. "Jemimy Dumbleton, if that don't beat the Dutch! for you to go prying into people's houses, and peeping into their eyes and guessing their secrets, and then to run around tattling them all over town to everybody, and ——"

But the rest of this homily will never be known, for at this critical moment the lad with the ambitious name, who was engaged in developing his military genius by firing carpet-rag cannon-balls in various directions and watching their rebound, made a shot which closed the squabble between Mrs. Hanks and her help. He bowled a bright red ball—relic of an old flannel shirt—through the middle of a screen which covered the fire-place in the summer. When he heard the crashing of the ball through the paper he set up a shout of triumph, clapping his hands together, but when he saw that his missile did not come back from its hiding-place, he stood looking in stupefied curiosity at the screen, the paper of which had almost closed over the

rent. He was quite unable to account for the sudden and total eclipse of his red ball.

Mrs. Hanks saw with terror the screen, which had cost the unskilled hands of herself and Jemima two or three hours of cutting and planning and pasting, destroyed at a blow. Mischief done by responsible hands has this compensation, that one has the great relief of scolding, but one would as well scold the wind as to rebuke so irresponsible an agent as Bobo. Mrs. Hanks seized him by the collar and shook him, then ran to the screen and put her hands behind it, holding the pieces in place as one is prone to do in such a case. It is the vague, instinctive expression of the wish that by some magic the injury might be recalled. Then she looked at her late antagonist, Jemima, for sympathy, and then she looked at the rent and uttered that unspellable interjection made by resting the tongue against the roof of the mouth and suddenly withdrawing it explosively. One writes it "tut-tut-tut," but that is not it at all.

Bobo fretted a little, as he generally did after being shaken up in this way, but having recovered his red ball, he was on the point of dashing it through the screen again, when his mother prudently took it away from him, put on his cap, led him to the door and said:

"Go to Roxy."

"Go to Roxy!" cried the little fellow, starting down the path, repeating the words over and over to himself as he went, as though he found it needful to revive instantly his feeble memory of his destination.

Having thus comfortably shed her maternal responsibilities, Mrs. Hanks proceeded to shed the carpet-rags also, by arraying herself to go out. This was a very simple matter, even for the wife of one of the principal men in

the town, for in those good old days of simplicity nothing more elaborate than a calico dress and sun-bonnet was needed to outfit a lady for shopping. Mrs. Hanks's sun-bonnet was soon adjusted, and she gave Jemima a farewell look, expressive of her horror of gossiping propensities, and then proceeded to where the tin sign beside the door read, "Miss Moore, Millinery and Mantua-maker," for the purpose of verifying Jemima's report.

Miss Moore was all attention. She showed Mrs. Hanks the latest novelty in scoop-shovel bonnets which she had just brought from Cincinnati, got out her box of ribbons and set it on the table, and assented to everything Mrs. Hanks said with her set formula of "very likely, Mrs. Hanks, very likely."

Miss Moore was not at all the conventional old maid. She was one of the mild kind, whose failure to marry came neither from flirting nor from a repellent temper, nor from mere chance, but, if it is needful to account for it at all, from her extreme docility. A woman who says "indeed" and "very likely" to everything, is very flavorless. Adams had concluded to marry her now, perhaps, because he liked paradoxes and because Miss Moore with her ready assent, would be the sharpest possible contrast to his contradictoriness. Then, too, she was the only person he could think of with whom he could live without quarreling. She never disputed anything he said, no matter how outrageous. He experimented on her one day by proving to her, conclusively, that polygamy was best and according to Scripture, and when he had done and looked to see her angry, she smiled and said, "Very likely —very likely, indeed."

Now that the long-becalmed bark of Miss Moore was about to sail into the looked-for haven, she set all her

pennons flying. This call from Mrs. Hanks, who was the sister of the first Mrs. Adams, seemed to her very significant. She became more complaisant than ever before. If Mrs. Hanks thought the orange ribbon a little too bright, Miss Moore said, "very likely, indeed." If Mrs. Hanks thought the blue just the thing, Miss Moore was again impressed and said, "very likely." But when Mrs. Hanks said that on the whole the blue would not do, Miss Moore thought so, too.

At last Mrs. Hanks pushed back her sun-bonnet, fingered the rolls of ribbon absently, and approached the point of attack.

"Well, Miss Moore, they do say you're not going to be Miss Moore always."

The milliner smiled and blushed and bridled a little, and then gave way and tittered. For when a woman's courtship comes late, the omitted emotions of her girlhood are all interpolated farther on, and it is no affectation for her to act like a young girl. Young girl she is in all the fluttering emotions of a young girl. Only the fluttering does not seem to us so pretty and fitting as it might have been twenty years earlier.

"Well, I suppose Roxy won't trouble you long."

Miss Moore looked mysterious.

"Very likely, indeed," she replied, and then added with a blush, "I've heard she has a beau." Miss Moore had heard only of Mark's attentions, but the suspicious Mrs. Hanks was now on the track of Whittaker.

"Mr. Whittaker?" she queried.

"Very likely." This was said partly from habit and partly to cover her real surprise at hearing the name of Whittaker. But this mechanical assent did not satisfy the inquisitive lady.

"Now *do* you know anything about it, Miss Moore? Don't say 'very likely' but tell me plainly."

Miss Moore was cornered. She did not want to tell a lie, for Miss Moore was as truthful as a person of her mild temper could be. But she was very loth to confess her ignorance and thus lose something of her importance in the eyes of Mrs. Hanks.

"Well, being's it's you, Mrs. Hanks—being's it's you"—Miss Moore spoke as though she were going to sell a bonnet under price—"I don't mind telling *you* the plain truth without any double-and-twisting. I tell you plainly 't I shouldn't be surprised 'f there was *something* in that, now I come to think of it. Very likely, indeed."

With this Mrs. Hanks had to be content, for to all further inquiries Miss Moore returned only her stereotyped assent.

At last Mrs. Hanks turned away from the ribbons without buying and said:

"Well, I must be going."

"Very likely," said Miss Moore from sheer habit. And then, too, she was turning over in her mind the intelligence Mrs. Hanks had given her, and what a nice morsel it would be to tell the wife of the ruling elder in Mr. Whittaker's church.

CHAPTER XV.

MARK'S MISSION.

"You don't say so." It was Sheriff Lathers who spoke, as he did so, putting his boots up on the mantel-piece, leaning back in his chair and spitting in the fire-place—expectorating by way of facilitating the expression of his ideas. He never could say anything of great importance without stopping to spit, and his little clique of hangers-on knew that when Major Tom Lathers thus loosened his mental machinery he was about to say something quite oracular. It was the signal for general silence and intense attention on the part of the bottle-nosed deputy and other interested disciples of the eminent and astute political philosopher whose misfortune it was that he must repose his boots on the poplar mantel-piece in the sheriff's office in Luzerne, rather than on the sofas in the United States Senate Chamber, for which last position of repose nature had clearly intended him. But while I have thus digressed the philosopher has run his sharp gray eyes in a scrutinizing way around the circle of admiring loafers, has rammed his fists into his pockets, corrugated his intellectual brow, resumed his meditative stare at the fire-place, in which there are the charred relics of the last fire it contained, destined to remain until the next fire shall be lighted in the fall. And now he is ready to speak.

"Well, I'll be swinged!" Here he paused. Pauses of this sort whet people's appetites. He looked about

him once more to be sure that he had now fairly arrested the whole-hearted attention of his devout followers.

"I didn't believe no ways, as Mark Bonamy would go, and he wouldn't a gone a step ef the ole man hadn't a threatened. Mark's one of this 'ere kind: you can coax him and tole him with a yer of corn, but jist try to drive him and he won't. 'Git up,' says you, 'I won't,' says he; 'Git up *there*,' says you, 'I'll be dogged ef I do,' says he, and lets his heels fly and you keel over backward. I tried drivin' and tolin' last summer and he kicked up every time I tried the spurs onto him. But he's goin' to Texas shore enough, they say. That'll wear out soon and he'll be back here, like the prodigal son, eatin' swine's flesh with the rest of us."

Here he gave a knowing look at each of his auditors and received a significant blink in return.

Just at this point Mark Bonamy himself came in to attend to some business with the sheriff's deputy.

"Good morning, Major," he said, half-conscious at once that he had interrupted some conversation about himself.

"Howdy, Mark? Goin' to Texas, shore as shootin', so they say?"

"Yes." This with some hesitation, as of a man who would fain make an avowal with reserve lest he should want to creep out of it.

"Well, Mark," here Lathers paused, placed his feet on the mantel-piece again and again performed the preliminary rite of expectoration, "I do say that they aint many folks that gives up more'n you do in goin' away on a fool mission to convert the heathen. Now, Mark, it mayn't be a bad move *after* all. Texas is a small republic, and you may come to be president there, like Joseph did in the land of Canaan. Hey? And Texas may be hitched on

behind Uncle Sam's steamboat some day as a sort of yawl. In which case look out for Mark Bonamy, United States Senator. It's better to be capt'in of a yawl than deck-hand on board the 'General Pike.' I don't know whether you're *such* a fool after all. Joseph didn't go down into Egypt for nothing. He had his eye on the corn."

Here Lathers winked at the deputy's luminous nose, and then looked seriously at Bonamy. Somehow Mark, at this moment, felt ashamed of his mission, and was quite willing to have Lathers impute to him interested designs rather than to appear to the eyes of that elevated moral philosopher a man who was somewhat disinterested and therefore a fool. The real chameleon is a sensitive vanity, prone to change color with every change of surrounding.

Mark Bonamy was not yet a licensed preacher, nor even an exhorter, for his probation of six months had not expired. He exhorted in meeting by general consent, but as a layman. A glowing account of his abilities and of his missionary enthusiasm had been sent to Bishop Hedding, who immediately booked him in his mind as suited to some dangerous and difficult rôle; for Hedding looked on men as a chess-player does upon his pieces, he weighed well the difference between a knight and a rook, and especially between a piece with great powers and a mere pawn. The death of Dr. Martin Ruter had weakened the Texan mission. In Mark, as described to him, he saw a man of force who might in time prove of the utmost value to the church in that new republic. So he wrote to Mark, asking if he would proceed in the autumn to Texas and take a place as second man on a circuit of some five hundred miles around, with forty-seven preaching-places. The letter came at the right moment, for Bonamy had just returned from the great camp-meeting in Moore's Woods,

with all his religious enthusiasm and missionary zeal at white heat. He had renewed for the tenth time in six months his solemn consecration of himself to some great work, had made a public and penitent confession of his backslidings, and resolved to grow cold no more. And of all his spiritual leaders none were wise enough to know and point out to him that this keying himself higher than his impulsive nature would bear, was one of his chief perils. Reactions were inevitable while he continued to be Mark Bonamy.

But while he was thus, as Cartwright would have said, "under a shouting latitude," there came the letter from the great bishop like the voice of God telling him to leave his father's house, and to get him out into the wilderness to seek the lost sheep. Many a man gets committed to some high and heroic course in his best moment, often wondering afterward by what inspiration he was thus raised above himself. Happy is he whose opportunity of decision finds him at high-water mark. Happy, if he have stability enough to stand by his decision after it is made.

Mark was not without debate and hesitation. He might even now have faltered but for two things. The influence of Roxy and of his father alike impelled him to accept. As soon as the word came to Colonel Bonamy that Mark had received such a letter, he did his best, unwittingly, to confirm him in his purpose by threatening him again with disinheritance. It only needed to awaken the son's combativeness to give his resolution strength and consistency. Even the religious devotion of a martyr may gain tone from inborn oppugnancy.

Then there was the influence of Roxy. Her relation to Mark was only that of a confidential religious friend

He had had occasion to consult her rather frequently, sometimes when meeting her on the street, sometimes calling at her house. But how often does one have to remark that mere friendship between a young man and a young woman is quite impossible for any considerable time. There is no King Knud who can say to the tide of human affection, "thus far and no farther." Mark's love for Roxy had ceased to be Platonic—he was not quite Plato. But how should he even confess to himself that he loved Roxy. For loving Roxy and going on a mission to the Brazos River were quite inconsistent. A man was not supposed to want a wife to help him fight Indians, rattlesnakes, Mexican desperadoes and starvation. And to give up the mission for Roxy's sake would have been to give up Roxy also. He knew dimly that it was only in the light of a self-sacrificing hero that she admired him. Perhaps he unconsciously recognized also that this admiration of him on her part had served to keep his purpose alive.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE MEETING.

On the Wednesday evening following Mark's reception of his call to go to Texas and his talk with Lathers, he would fain see Roxy. It was the evening of the prayer-meeting, and if he had been prone to neglect it, he would have found Roxy nowhere else. But he had no inclination in his present state of feeling to go away from the meeting.

The brethren had heard of the call to the mission, and most touching prayers were offered for his welfare and success. Mark himself prayed with deep and genuine pathos. Toward the last the minister called on Roxy to pray, and she who had been born full of the missionary spirit, who would have rejoiced to lay down her life for the lost sheep in the wilderness, who had been the source of most of Mark's inspiration, began to pray, not with her accustomed directness and fervor, but with a faltering voice. Twonnet's fortune-telling had awakened in Roxy a sense of the strength of her own feeling for Mark, and with this came a maidenly delicacy. She faltered, hesitated, picked her words, prayed in platitudes, until at last, after mentioning Mark only in the most general way, she proceeded to pray for those to whom he was sent. All the force of her strong nature found utterance in the cry of the lost, and when she ceased everybody was weeping And when the brethren and sisters rose from their

knees, the old schoolmaster in the amen corner started to sing:

"From Greenland's icy mountains;"

and as everybody sang it with feeling, Mark felt ashamed that he should ever have thought of any other life than that of a missionary. It were better to die of malarial fever among the rowdies and rattlesnakes of the Brazos River, than to live a thousand years in ease and plenty. And when at the close of the meeting the military notes of "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" resounded through the old meeting-house, Mark regretted that so much time would intervene before he could reach the field of battle.

In this state of enthusiasm he walked home with Roxy. And this enthusiasm lifted him almost to the height of Roxy's perpetual exaltation. They talked of that in which they both were interested, and is it strange that they were drawn the one to the other by their community of feeling? Mark did not even now distrust himself; he did not once imagine that there was any difference between his flush of zeal, and the life-long glow of eager unselfishness and devoutness that was the very essence of the character of Roxy. He could not distinguish between himself—thin comet that he was, renewing his ever-waning heat, first by the fire of this sun and then by the radiance of that—and Roxy, the ever-burning fixed star whose fire of worship and charity was within herself. But taking himself at the estimate she put upon him, he rejoiced in having a friend worthy to sympathize with him, and when he parted with her, he pressed Roxy's hand and said:

"Oh, Roxy! if you were only going with me! You make me brave. I am better when I am with you.

Think of the good we might do together. Some day I shall come back for you if you'll let me."

He held her hand in both of his, and he could feel her trembling.

His voice was full of pleading, and Roxy was in a flutter of mingled admiration, pity, and love. That this brave servant of the Lord, taking his life in hand, casting ambition, friends, and property behind him, should appeal to her! She dared not speak, and she could not pray. In a moment Bonamy had kissed her hand. A maidenly recoil seized her, she withdrew her hand, opened the gate, and ran up the walk between the rows of pretty-by-nights and touch-me-nots. It was not until she stood in the door with her hand on the latch-string, that she turned toward her companion and said softly, in a voice suffused with emotion:

"Good-night, Mark!"

And then she went into the house with her soul in chaos. Zeal, duty, and love neither contended nor agreed. The scrupulous girl could understand nothing, see nothing. Pitying thoughts of Whittaker strove with her thoughts of Mark.

And that night she dreamed that she had set out to find the lost sheep that had left the ninety-and-nine and strayed in the wilderness, and Mark had set out with her. But ever they became more and more separated in the thorn-thickets of Texas, until at last Mark left her to travel on alone while he gave over the search. And the thickets grew higher and more dense, her feet were pierced with thorns, and her body exhausted with weariness. She saw panthers and catamounts and rattlesnakes and alligators and indescribable creatures of terror about her; they hissed at her and rushed upon her, so that she shuddered

as she pushed on and on through the dense brake, wondering whether the poor lost sheep were not already devoured. But at last she came upon the object of her search environed with wild beasts. Trembling with terror she broke through and laid hold on the far-wandering sheep,—the monsters fled before her and the impregnable fold all at once inclosed her and the lost one. Then she discovered that the lost whom she had saved, was, by some transformation, Mark himself. And even while the Shepherd was commending her, the trembling girl awoke.

CHAPTER XVII.

A REMONSTRANCE.

After her visit to the millinery and mantua-makery of Miss Moore, Mrs. Hanks debated with herself what to do. She could not consult Jemima, for Jemima belonged to the enemy. But upon debating various plans, she resolved to see Roxy herself. She was Roxy's aunt, and the aunt ought to have some influence with the motherless niece, she reasoned. She was a little ashamed to go to Roxy now, it was so long since she had entered the old log-house which had sheltered her childhood in the days when wandering Indians still traversed at intervals the streets of the new village of Luzerne. But then she had been so busy with her own children, Roxy ought to make allowance for that.

These explanations she made to Roxy when she made her call on the next day after the prayer-meeting. She couldn't come before. And then Roxy was so steady that she didn't need looking after. It wasn't every girl that could keep a house so clean and do so much for her father. All this talk troubled Roxy. She was simple-minded and direct, and the lurking suspicion of ulterior purpose in her aunt's words, and the consciousness of having something to conceal, disturbed her.

"I understand, Roxy," she said at last, "that you've had one or two beaus lately. Now you know that I'm in the place of a mother to you, and I hope you won't do anything about marrying without consulting me."

Roxy bent over her sewing and grew red in the face Mrs. Hanks interpreted this flush of indignation as a blush.

"I suppose you are already engaged," she said, with an air of offense. "I don't think you ought to treat your mother's sister in that way. I was told that you were engaged to Mr. Whittaker. I must say I don't think it the best you can do."

"I am not engaged to Mr. Whittaker or to anybody else," said Roxy, giving way to her rising anger, and breaking her needle. "I wish people would mind their own business."

"Well, Roxy, I must say that is not a nice way to treat me when I come to give you advice. If I can't talk to you, who can?"

Roxy's sense of injury and neglect which she thought she had conquered by prayer all revived now, and she bit her lip.

"I tell you plainly, Roxy, that if you marry Mr. Whittaker you'll get a cold Presbyterian that does not believe in real heart religion. They educate their ministers without asking whether they have a real divine call or not. Some of them, I expect, are not soundly converted. And you know how you'll suffer for the means of grace if you join the Presbyterians. They won't have any praying or speaking by women. They don't have any class-meetings, and I don't think they have that *deep depth* of godliness you know that we Methodists believe in. And they don't allow shouting or crying, and that's a quenching of the spirit. So I say. For David says in the Psalms to shout and to cry aloud, and to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Now, I do hope you won't marry a cold-blooded Presbyterian that believes in predestination, and that a certain number was born to be damned. And little chil

dren, too, for the Confession of Faith says that children not a span long are in hell, and——"

"The Confession of Faith don't say that," said Roxy.

"Oh! you've been reading it, have you. I didn't know you'd gone so far. Now, I say that there's *some* good Christians in the Presbyterian church, but a Methodist that leaves her own church to join the Presbyterians has generally backslid beforehand. And a girl that changes her religion to get a husband——"

"Who said I meant to change my religion to get a husband?" Roxy was now fiercely angry. "If you're going to talk that way, I will not stay and listen," and the girl drew herself up proudly; but her sensitive conscience smote her in a moment for her anger, and she sat down again, irresolute.

"Well, Roxy, you've got your father's temper along with your mother's religion. Though for that matter I think a temper's a good thing. But when you've got a chance to marry such a Methodist as Mark Bonamy, now, I don't see why you should take a poor Presbyterian preacher that hasn't got a roof to cover his head. Mark'll get over his mission soon. Missionary fever with young Christians is like wild oats with young sinners—it's soon over. You can cool Mark down if you try. Show him how much good he can do if he'll stay here and inherit his father's wealth. But Mark'll get his share anyway. The old man won't leave him out. And now, Roxy, you'll get over your freaks as I have got over mine, and if you miss your chance you'll be sorry for it. It isn't every day a girl whose father's a poor shoe-maker and who lives in a log-house, gets a man with a good farm and a brick house, and a chance of going to Congress or getting to be a bishop——"

"Oh! Aunt Henrietta, hush!" Roxy was on her feet now. "I've got nothing to do with Mr. Whittaker or Mark, and if I had, you've no business talking that way. If you don't hush I'll say something awful."

"Well, I declare! For a girl as religious as *you*, that's a pretty how-do-ye-do, ain't it, now?"

Here Roxy left the room to keep herself from saying something awful, leaving Mrs. Henrietta Hanks to gather her cape about her shoulders, put on her sun-bonnet and depart with the comfortable feeling that she "had cleared her skirts anyhow." The faithful discharge of a duty disagreeable to others maketh the heart of the righteous to rejoice.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GOSSIP AND GIGGLING.

Miss Moore was a gossip of the good-natured kind. She never told anything for the sake of harming anybody. She was as innocent in her gossip as she was in her habit of plucking out her front hair with tweezers to make her forehead intellectual. The milliner's shop in a village is in some sort a news-depot. People bring hither their items of news and carry away whatever has been left here by others. It is a fair exchange. The milliner has the start of everybody else; for who should know so well as she whether Mrs. Greathouse will wear cherry ribbon or brown? Who knows the premonitory symptoms of a wedding so well as the skillful woman who trims the bonnet? And shall we condemn gossip? Only where it is thoughtless or malicious. For without the ventilating currents of gossip the village would be a stagnant pool. We are all gossips. The man who reads the daily paper may despise the "tattle" of the town, but he devours the tattle of the reporter who gets his livelihood by gossip. Whether we talk about a big world or a little one, it is the gossip about others that saves us from becoming eremites in the wilderness of our own egotism.

But did the red-bird that sang under Miss Moore's window that morning ask whether his notes were a delight to any one's ears? Or did he just whistle because whistling is a necessity of red-birdism? Miss Moore for her part did not ask whether her function was of use to the com

munity or not. It was not her place to philosophize about gossips, but to gossip,—an employment in which she received the moral support of the best citizens. And in a village the general consent of the best citizens is of more weight than the decalogue.

But why should anything so clearly beneficial as gossip be carried on clandestinely? Why is a bit of gossip told in a voice that has something sly and delightfully wicked about it? Is it that one enjoys copyrighted information, which one is not to tell,—or at most not with the name of the informant attached? Or is it that one likes to fancy oneself doing something forbidden?

At any rate Miss Moore, having possession of a bit of information which she knew would delight Mrs. Highbury, the wife of the principal ruling elder of Whittaker's church, was perplexed to find a pretext for calling on Mrs. Highbury that she might not seem to have come on purpose to tell tales. Experienced gossip that she was, she could not get over the notion that her traffic in information was illicit. She might have called on Mrs. Highbury outright; for there is no caste feeling in a village that proscribes the milliner. A woman was none the worse in the Hoosier Luzerne in 1841 for the possession of that kind of skill which we call a trade. But Miss Moore, at last, remembered something that she wanted to ask Mrs. Highbury's advice about, or at least she remembered something concerning which she contrived to make herself believe she wanted information or counsel. So Miss Moore went up under the grape-vines that led to Mr. Highbury's door, and then around over the stone-paved walk to the back-door, where the wide arbor shaded the broad pavement, in the middle of which stood the cistern with its hook in readiness for use.

Miss Moore went in over the broad clean porch into the sitting-room and was received cordially; for, besides her importance as a milliner, she was also a member of the Presbyterian church, and in those days of polemical animosities a small and somewhat beleaguered denomination held closely together.

"I thought I'd run over, Mrs. Highbury, and ask you about the cape to your bonnet. How long do you think it ought to be?"

Mrs. Highbury had a habit of leaving such things to the superior judgment of the milliner. For the milliner to throw the decision back on her, was like asking her to solve a problem in geometry. And so the plump, well-fed little lady sank down into her arm-chair and began rocking herself so energetically as to lift her feet off the floor at each tilt backward. Her mind was exhausting itself in thinking how impossible it was that she should ever decide what should be the length of a piece of rose-colored silk at the base of a scoop-shovel bonnet.

"I declare to goodness, I don't know, Miss Moore." Here Mrs. Highbury opened her fan, and began to ply it and rock more vigorously and cheerfully than before. "Did you see the one that lady from Cincinnati had on at church, on Sunday?"

Of course, Miss Moore had noted every bonnet in the church. She was not such a heathen as not to make the most of her "Sabbath and sanctuary privileges." But she did not reply to Mrs. Highbury's question. For here was the opportunity she had sought. It was a dangerous leap from the cape of a straw bonnet in church to the parson's love affair, but there might not come a better opportunity.

"Yes; but now you speak of church, reminds me. Did

you notice any change in Mr. Whittaker's appearance on Sunday?"

"No, I didn't. Why?"

Miss Moore felt her superiority now.

"Did you think he had the look of a man just engaged to be married?"

"You don't tell me Mr. Whittaker's going to be married," cried the stout little lady, forgetting to rock and allowing the toes of her shoes to rest on the floor.

"Well; I don't say anything about it. I've heard something of the kind."

"Who to, for goodness gracious' sake?"

"Well, that's a delicate question, especially in view of my peculiar circumstances; I suppose I oughtn't to say anything."

Miss Moore was human, and she knew that so long as she had a secret which curious Mrs. Highbury did not know, that lady was her humble servant.

"Yes; but you must tell me," pleaded Mrs. Highbury. "Mr. Whittaker ought not to marry without consulting the session. And if he consults the session I will know, I suppose. You can't keep secrets between man and wife."

"Very likely. But you know with me it's a sort of a family secret. Not exactly a family secret—— " here Miss Moore tittered and stammered. "Well, you know, I didn't mean to let my own secrets out, but I suppose everybody knows. I never *did* see such a horrible town for talk as this is. They wont let anybody's private affairs alone." Here Miss Moore's face reddened, and she smothered a girlish giggle.

Mrs. Highbury suddenly leaned forward so as to bring her heels on the floor and began to fan herself again.

"Why, Rachel Moore, what 've *your* family affairs got to

do with Mr. Whittaker's marrying? Is he going to marry you? You're too old,—I mean you're already engaged to Mr. Adams, they say. What do you mean? Don't be so mysterious, or folks 'll think you've lost your senses."

"I believe I have," said Miss Moore, and then she burst into another fit of laughing, while the aristocratic little dumpling rocked away again for dear life. Rocking was her substitute for thinking.

Miss Moore's habitual propriety and gravity soon came to her rescue, and she attempted to explain to Mrs. Highbury that by "family secret" she meant to allude—che-he—to the family—che-he—with which she was to become the—the—che-he-he,—or rather that Mr. Whittaker was not going to che-he—marry her,—but that it was somebody else who was going to be a che-he-he-he,—that is, he was going che-he-he-he-he.

Poor Mrs. Highbury did not know whether to laugh or get angry, and, being in doubt, she took a middle course—she rocked herself. Her round face had a perplexed and injured look, as she waited for Miss Moore to explain herself.

"I do believe that I am che-he-he-he," said Miss Moore.

"I know you are, Rachel. Why can't you control yourself and tell a straight story? Who is Mr. Whittaker going to marry; you, or your mother? You say it's in your family."

"My mother! Oh! che-he-he. Not my mother, but my che-he-he."

"Your che-he-he! What do you mean?"

"Not my che-he mother, but my daughter, che-he-he."

"Your daughter! Why, Miss Moore, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I don't mean my che--he daughter, but my che–he--he -he–hoo!"

By this time, little fat Mrs. Highbury was also laughing convulsively and screaming between her fits of laughter.

"What is—what is che–he, what is your che–he–he?"

"My che–he—my che–he step-daughter, that is to be."

Mrs. Highbury grew sober and began to wipe her eyes.

"You don't mean Roxy Adams?"

"Yes, I do."

Mrs. Highbury shut her pretty mouth tight. She didn't know whether she approved or disapproved of Roxy Adams. How could she tell what she thought until she heard Mr. Highbury's opinion? For Mrs. Highbury's rôle was that of echo. It might be that Roxy Adams would make a good Presbyterian. It might be that she would corrupt the church. Mrs. Highbury would wait until her husband spoke. Then she would give him back his own opinions with emphasis, and tell her friends that she had "told Mr. Highbury so." People were certain that the little Mrs. H. had great influence with the big Mr. H. Turned him round her little finger

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RULING ELDER INTERFERES.

Mr. Highbury was a Presbyterian of the Western Pennsylvania stamp. Generations of training in the Calvinistic formulas and the Presbyterian forms had produced, perhaps, a hereditary habit of thought. He could not see anything in any other light than that of his traditional opinions. Above all, these mushroom Methodists who did nothing decently or in order, were to be condemned. To admit that any large number of them were really Christian would be to suppose that God had chosen to convert more people through unsound doctrines tending to Pelagianism than he had through the preaching of the true doctrines of divine sovereignty and unconditional election. The fact that so many Methodists backslid was to him evidence beyond question that they had not much of God's grace among them.

When Mrs. Highbury told him what Miss Moore had said, Mr. Highbury felt that the time for rebuke and reproof had come. The revival of the past winter had irritated him. The large numbers that had joined the Methodists were an eye-sore; for churches of differing sects in a small town are very like rival corner grocers, each watching with jealous eye the increase of his neighbor's trade.

After debating the matter for a day or two and growing gradually warm with righteous indignation as he reflected

Mr. Highbury put on his hat on Thursday morning and walked down the street toward Lefaure's. The singing locusts were making their sweet, monotonous, drowsy din in the air; the great running rose-bushes were climbing up to the second-story windows with their arms full of white and red and yellow roses; there were faint sounds of the pastoral music of tinkling cow-bells in the distance, and on either hand the green hills grew hazy where they were touched by the blue sky flecked with white clouds. But no sound of singing locust, of faint far-away cow bells and crowing chickens, or sight of rich rose-trees or vista of high wooded hill and of soft white cloud sailing through the infinite ocean of deep blue sky, touched the soul of the ruling elder. Highbury's horizon was narrow; there were no objects within it but himself, his family, his trade, and his church. All else was far away in the dim distance like the unnoted sound of the cow-bells. For there is a sky in every man's soul, and some souls are near-sighted.

On the other hand, Mr. Whittaker's sky was clear. He came out of his room at nine o'clock, walked along the porch and stood looking at the hills on the other side of the river, scanning the green apples in the young trees near at hand, and watching the white clouds, not in the sky, but floating in the under-sky, which he saw below in the waters of the wide river. He heard faintly the distant crowing of the cocks—even from a mile away, across the river, he could hear them. He heard the cow-bells, and the "chook, chook," of the red-bird, the conversational "can't, can't" of the cat-bird, whose musical powers had all been exhausted by his matin song. The time for him to see Roxy again was drawing near, and his spirit was full of hope. It seemed to him that his soul was like the great, wide Ohio,—it mirrored in its depths the glory

of the sky above. Presently old Jacques Dupin—Twonnet's grandfather—came hobbling out of his room into the sunlight. He was a picturesque figure, with his trowsers of antiquated cut, his loose jacket, and his red yarn cap pointed at the top and tasseled.

Full of human kindness and sympathy this morning, Whittaker hurried over to meet the octogenarian, and to inquire how he was.

"Comment-vous portez-vous aujour-d'hui?" cried the minister in the deaf old man's ear.

"Très-bien, vary well I—remercie, M'sieur." The old man felt obliged to make an effort to speak in English out of courtesy to Whittaker's feeble French.

The minister assisted him to a seat in the large rocking-chair; then he adjusted a stick of wood under the rockers so that the chair would not rock, for the old man could not bear the sense of insecurity which the motion of the chair gave him.

"Mr. Weetakare," he began, in a querulous voice, as soon as his feet had been placed upon his foot-stool,—"Mr. Weetakare, je ne sais quoi—I don't know wat God A'mighty means. Mon frère—my brothare Guillaume, who was good for somet'in', he die; my cousin Bernard, il est mort aussi, il y a deux ans—it ees so much as two yare past, and my sœur, she aussi ees gone. Moi—I am not wort' so much as a picayune, and moi—je leef on, on, on. Pardi, I don't know wat God A'mighty ees about to leef te dead dree wat bears no pommes at all and to cut down all de rest. Eh! que pensez-vous, Monsieur—wat you dink?"

And then without waiting for Mr. Whittaker to reply, the old man went on:

"Wen I was a boy in Suisse, I remembare dat——"

But it was at the beginning of this reminiscence that Mr. Whittaker's mind wandered entirely away from the old man in the red cap sitting there under the overhanging vines,—wandered away from his story of boyhood in Switzerland, his garrulous memories of the Pays de Vaud and of the simple mountain life so different from that of his old age on the fertile banks of this great river. Mr Whittaker heard him not, for all the time his mind went after his heart to the home of the shoe-maker's daughter with its honeysuckle and morning-glory vines and to the morning-glory herself. At last the old man had reached some sort of denouement in his polyglot tale, he tapped Whittaker's knee with his trembling hand and burst into an old man's laugh—faint and far down in the throat like the gurgling of subterranean waters.

"Wat you dink—que pensez-vous, Monsieur? Ees it not—ha-ha—ees it not—he-he—très drole?

"It is very funny, no doubt," answered the other in some confusion. But at that moment Mr. Highbury was ushered to the porch by Twonnet. After a few minutes of speech with the old man, the ruling elder took the minister's arm and asked for an interview in private, leading his companion to the further end of the long porch, where they sat down upon a bench.

Mr. Highbury began about the Methodists, their unsoundness, their illiterate preachers and uninstructed laymen, their reception of all sorts of people without any discrimination. Then he enlarged on the necessity for building up a more intelligent piety and one sound in doctrine and not running into wild excitement.

Mr. Whittaker assented.

But Mr. Highbury thought that Presbyterians should not associate too much with Methodists.

Mr. Whittaker did not say anything.

Mr. Highbury thought that Mr. Whittaker would do well not to visit at Adams's again, because it would make talk, and——

But just at this critical moment came Twonnet. She had already affected to have much business in the room which opened just behind the seat occupied by the two gentlemen, she had observed closely their countenances, and now she brought a tray of bright striped apples, insisting in her most winning fashion that Mr. Highbury should accept one. The ruling elder was vexed that his speech should have been broken off just when he was drawing it to a focus, but there was no help for it. And besides, he was human, and it was not in his man's nature to be displeased with such distinguished hospitality from so cheery a brunette as Twonnet. She paused after the gentlemen had taken apples to talk a minute with the half impatient Highbury, shaking her brown curls with merry laughter and chatter about nothing at all, and so filling that gentleman's head with a pleasant sense of her presence that he found it hard to resume his severity when her merry eyes were gone.

He gathered up his dispersed forces, however, and prepared to return to the charge. But at the disadvantage, now, that the enemy had had time to put himself under arms. Whittaker was slow to arouse, but while Twonnet talked he had been busy guessing the drift of the ruling elder's speech and in growing a little indignant.

"I was saying, Mr. Whittaker—a—that——" resumed Mr. Highbury, hesitantly.

"That I ought not to go to Mr. Adams's so often,"—put in the minister, whose nerves were irritable from the excitement to which he had been subjected of late; "and

I, on my part, insist that I have a right to go to see the man if I find his company agreeable."

Mr. Highbury was silent a moment. Who could have dreamed that a minister on three hundred dollars a year would have the pluck to speak to the richest man in his church as though they were at all equals? He would sooner have expected his store-boy to show spirit than Whittaker. What is the use of a moneyed man in a church, if he is not to control the pastor?

"But perhaps you do not know," continued the elder, "that your going there so often has started a report that you are engaged to Roxy Adams."

Mr. Whittaker was silent. He could truthfully say that he was not betrothed to Roxy. But he felt that this would be a cowardly shirking of the issue.

"Now, of course, there is no truth in this report," continued the merchant, in a tone which indicated his belief that there was; "but think how much damage the idea—the very idea may do us. What a shock it is to our congregation to think of you marrying a girl who was never taught a word of the catechism, who doesn't believe in the doctrine of God's sovereignty, and the election of grace, who sings those wild Methodist songs, and prays in meeting, and even makes speeches in love-feast before a crowded audience. And then she——"

But just here, to Mr. Highbury's vexation, and the minister's relief, Twonnet came upon the stage once more, entering by way of the garden gate, with a nosegay of pinks, and roses, touch-me-nots, and Johnny-jump-ups, intermingled with asparagus twigs, and some old-man-in-green. This she presented to the disturbed Mr. Highbury, asking pardon for interrupting the conversation and requesting him to give the bouquet to Mrs. Highbury for her.

She said that she wanted to show Mrs. Highbury which had the finest pinks. Then, as she started away, she turned round to ask Mr. Highbury if he had heard about Mrs. Boone, the poor woman whose husband was a drunkard.

"Roxy Adams," she said, with entire innocency—'Roxy Adams went down there two weeks ago and nursed that poor creature for three days, without leaving her day or night, and without taking more than an hour of sleep at a time. I didn't know anything about it till Mrs. Boone's little boy came up here and brought me a note from Roxy asking for a bottle of wine to keep the old woman alive, for the fever had left her nearly dead. And then I went down to help Roxy, but the old creature wouldn't drink a spoonful of wine and water out of my hand. It was all Roxy, Roxy; and Roxy nursed her as if she'd been her own mother. That's what you might call pure religion and undefiled, isn't it, Mr. Highbury?"

"Well, yes, if it came from faith and was not self-righteousness. All *our* righteousness is as filthy rags, you know. I have no right to judge. Roxy *seems* to be a Christian."

"Doesn't the Bible say we shall know them by their fruits?" returned Twonnet. "For my part, I think if Roxy isn't saved the rest of Luzerne had better give up. Of course, though, I believe in salvation by grace—there's no other chance for such as me."

And with that the girl went away laughing, and Mr. Whittaker wondered whether some kind providence had sent her to his rescue, or whether, after all, this mercurial girl had not a depth of *finesse* in her character. Had he lived under the same roof with her so long without finding out that she was something more than a merry superficial chatterer?

Meantime Mr. Highbury now saw that he must change his tack. He could not go on assailing even the theology of Roxy Adams without bringing to an explosion the gathering indignation of the cool New England parson, whose face had been growing redder for some time.

"Certainly, what she says about Roxy Adams is true. I wish she was a Presbyterian. Then we might stand some chance of getting Mark Bonamy. Poor fellow! he is dead in love with her. And I'm afraid—you'll excuse me Mr. Whittaker,—I'm afraid any interference on your part with Mark's prospects there might drive all his good resolutions out of his head. But I must go."

For just at that moment Mr. Highbury remembered with a pang that there was to be an "animal show" in town that very day, and that the store must even now be full of country customers. He hurriedly bade Mr. Whittaker good-bye. He hardly took time to shake hands civilly with the dreamy old man in the red cap at the other end of the porch. He left the pinks and touch-me-nots lying on the bench where he had sat, and hastened through the hall out of the door and up the street, noting, as he walked, not the scenery, but the number of wagons standing by the hitching-rails, at either side to the court house square, and calculating how much of "bit" calico and brown sugar, how many clocks, and shoes, and nails, and clothes-lines he might sell during the day.

But the minister sat still upon the porch. The last arrow of the retreating assailant had wounded him. His life had been one of severe self-denial. For a few days, he had thought that duty and inclination lay in the same direction. Now, this awful specter of the harm he might do to the eternal welfare of Bonamy stood in his path. In his day men believed in perdition—hell was a very real

and horrible place of everlasting torture. If, now, he should be the means of toppling over poor Mark Bonamy into that abyss, and even then after all should be forgiven, what an awful thing it would be for him to think about in eternity, that he had wrought endless misery to a human soul!

The birds, the rose-bushes, the singing locusts and all the sweet and drowsy music of a summer day, and all the beauty of the hills and the placidity of the river seemed to belong to another world now. He was a truant school-boy, who had had a good time. But now he was brought back to take his flogging, and the world did not seem so pleasant any more.

Twonnet stood near him when he looked up. The droll girl had set her face into the very expression that was characteristic of Mr. Highbury.

"Don't marry a Methodist," she began, mimicking the ruling elder's tone; "don't marry any singing, shouting, shoe-maker's daughter; marry my niece, Caroline, now, she is good and quiet and——"

The drollery and mimicking of manner were perfect, but they jarred upon Mr. Whittaker's present state of feeling. He was amazed at this sudden revelation of the real Twonnet; but he was in trouble, and he wanted sympathy, not diversion.

"Oh, Twonnet," he cried, pathetically, reaching out his hands in sudden impulse, and seizing hers, "don't make fun. I am sick. I have done wrong. Think what harm I've done, maybe, to Mr. Bonamy."

"Mark Bonamy! Pshaw!" said Twonnet. But she went no further. For the minister's voice in appealing thus to her, his act of confidence in taking her hands had touched her heart, and she felt again that old frightful

pang of love or jealousy come back. She longed to com fort the good, troubled man. Why should she plead for Roxy? Roxy had everybody to love her. But who loved Twonnet?

The minister suddenly released her hands, and went to his room. But all the drollery was gone from the heart of Twonnet. She opened the gate through the fence, went down betwen the currant-bushes and hollyhocks to the further end of the garden. There she sat down on a little stool beneath a quince-tree, and cried. She who was so strong that she had undertaken to deliver others was weak now. The voice of her friend crying for help had made her helpless; for she was a woman. And much as she declared to herself in this hour that she would never marry a sober, hesitating, severe minister, her heart still gave the lie to her thought as she saw, in her memory, his tearful eyes upturned to her own, and heard him call her name so eagerly.

Then she grew angry and said: "What does he ask me to help him in his love affairs for? I'm sure I don't know."

CHAPTER XX.

A MILLSTONE.

THE temptations of a scrupulous man like Whittaker are never gross. The

> "Fierce Anthropophagi,
> Spectre, diaboli,
> What scared St. Anthony,
> Hobgoblins, lemures,
> Dreams of antipodes,
> Night-riding incubi
> Troubling the fantasy,"

are not for him. But it is a most unhappy thing for a man to be both scrupulous and logical. The combination is bad. The scrupulous man, and especially the scrupulous woman, whose logic is defective, is saved from a thousand snares. On the other hand the severely logical man who is not scrupulous escapes easily. This is how it happens that the harshest creeds do little harm. One man is saved by his laziness, another by his transparent quibbles, while a third walks boldly out the front door, having but a feeble moral sense. Mark Bonamy, for instance, would not have been troubled by Whittaker's doubts. His easy-going egotism, his calm confidence that his own purposes and welfare were of the first importance, would have furnished a premise from which to draw any convenient conclusion. But poor Whittaker was ground between his clear logic on the one hand, and his severe

scruples on the other. He had an instinctive doubt of the security of Mark's religious life. He did not question the doctrine of final perseverance, but then he could not be sure of the genuineness of a conversion. What if he should offend one of these little ones? It were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck.

He did not dare go back to that forbidden logic which absolves itself from obligation by pushing on toward fatalism. He shuddered at Antinomianism, for that is the extinction of conscience. It was at this point that the intuitions of an honest nature put a stop to logic.

In a state of mind such as his, there is one thing stronger than reasoning. It is the persistence of ideas. Once mastered by the notion that in wedding Roxy he would be offending against one of those who were yet but babes in Christ: he could not shake it off. The awful words "millstone about his neck," re-echoed in his mind.

He tried to write a letter withdrawing his offer. He began: "My dear Roxy——" but decided that that was too cordial. Then he wrote "Dear friend——" but that would not do. "Miss Adams" was too cold. At last after tearing up several sheets of paper he resolved not to write at all. Good sense, which is not exactly either conscience or logic, but both with something added, began to revive. Why not go to Roxy without waiting for the week to expire and learn from her what was the exact state of the case? It was nonsense to decide such a question for her. Besides, the half threat of Highbury made it quite necessary that he should assert his right to do as he thought best.

When he set out to go to see Roxy, the town was full of people come to see the "animal show" The whole stagnant life of the country about was stirred by the

arrival of a spectacle. Here were women standing by the hour with babies in their arms, waiting to see the outside of the box wagons as they passed along the streets. Horses were neighing to other horses all about the open square in the middle of the town, and groups of people formed and dissolved and re-formed again like molecules in effervescence, while everywhere, girls in new calico and lawn, and boys in cotton drilling, hurried to and fro.

When Whittaker neared Roxy's house he began to doubt again whether he was acting wisely or not. So he walked on further till he came to a gate leading into a pasture. Through this into a grass-bordered path, along the path up to the foot of the hill, he traveled mechanically; then up the rocky hill-side, through the patches of papaw, he went clambering over a stone wall into a vineyard, and over another into a road on top of the ridge. From the summit he saw the whole village at his feet, the river, the distant hills, and all the glorious landscape. He saw as in a dream, for he cared neither for river nor sky, hill-slope nor town. He stopped a moment to single out the log house in which lived the shoe-maker's daughter. Then he strode eagerly onward, at first along the open road, afterward turning whimsically into a disused wagon-track, almost overgrown now with bright May-apple plants. Out of this he turned into a blind cow-path leading into a dark ravine or "hollow." Down this he followed in the rocky bed of a dry "branch," in the shadow of beech and butternut trees, and those noble tulip-trees which they class with poplars in Indiana,—until at last he came suddenly out upon the bank of Indian Creek. He had walked two rough and rocky miles. He had meant to think when he started, but he had not thought at all. He had only a sense of having left the noisy little town behind him, and

of having marched straight forward to the mouth of this dark hollow. He had not been able to walk away from his perplexities. He stood and looked at the woods; he idly traced the gigantic grape-vines up to where they were interlaced in the tree-boughs, a hundred feet or so from the ground; he stared vacantly at the stagnant creek, the sluggish current of which seemed to be drying up in the summer heat, spite of the protection of the dense forest. A solitary ugly, short-tailed, long-legged bittern flapped awkwardly past with discordant screams, and a few hoarse bull-frogs croaked in the margin of the water. Whittaker, heated and tired, with all his fiery eagerness spent, sat down on a moss-grown log, and thought again what an awful thing it was to have a millstone hanged about one's neck. Then, from the mere religious habit of his life, he knelt on the bed of leaves. But he did not pray; he only lay across the log and listened to the beating of his heart, and recalled images of Roxy with her background of the quaint old house and its homely interior.

After a long time he started slowly and wearily back toward Luzerne.

Meantime the "animal show" at the appointed time "took up," as the country people expressed it. It was a poor enough show. The few beasts looked very tame and dispirited, but then the visitors paused for only a brief interview with the scrawny lion, that bore but a weak resemblance to his own portrait on the show-bills as the "king of beasts;" they did not waste much time on the small tiger, from "the jungles of India." After giving a cracker or two to the elephant, they assembled in a great crowd in front of the cage of grinning, chattering, scratching monkeys. In that steady-going age, people were not conscious that there might be aught of family affection in

this attraction. Monkeys then were monkeys pure and simple; one could look at them as one looks at caricatures of nobody in particular; one might laugh at them without a sense of gamboling rudely over the graves of his ancestors.

Near this cage stood Twonnet, another girl now from the Twonnet of the morning, laughing in her free, childish way at the pranks of the monkeys. She had all the children with her—Cecille, Isabelle, Adolphe, Louis and little Julie, whom they called "Teet," a foreshortening of Petite. A little monkey had just pulled the tail of the big baboon in the next cage, to the great delight of the children, when who should come along but Jemima. Squaring herself off where she could see, she declared that "them air monkeys was a kind of people. Only needed a little dressin' up and you'd have human critters. An' they wouldn't be no bigger fools than most folks. They'd do for to run for the legislater, Mr. Bonamy."

This last to Mark, who made his appearance at this moment in company with Roxy.

"Can't talk well enough for that," he answered.

"Why!" said Twonnet, always ready for attack when Mark was at hand. "I didn't suppose you Methodists would attend such a place. Didn't they church Wayne Thomas for going to a circus last year?"

"Yes, but that was a circus," said Roxy. "This kind of a show has nothing wrong it. It gives a body information. I'm sure it's better than reading Goldsmith's 'Animated Nature.'"

"It's right improvin', I'm shore," said Jemima, with droll mock gravity. "Shouldn't think they'd be any use o' your goin' to Texas, now, Mr. Bonamy."

"Why?"

"Oh, the people must be so much 'improved' by cata mounts and other varmint that they can see any day without pay that missionaries ain't needed. But I s'pose animals—bars an' rattle-snakes and sich—haint improvin' to the mind tell they're put in cages."

"But," said Roxy, timidly, like a person caught doing something wrong, "it isn't any harm to look at these creatures. They are God's works, you know."

"Yes, but some of God's works haint calc'lated to be admired while they're runnin' 'round loose. If Mark—Mr. Bonamy here—finds a nasty, p'ison copperhead snake under his piller some night, I don't 'low but what he'll up with a stick and give him a right hard knock on the head smashin' God's works all to pieces."

"That I will, Jemima, kill him first and admire him afterward," said Mark, laughing in his hearty, unreserved fashion.

Slowly the people dispersed after watching the underfed tiger devour a very tough piece of meat, and hearing the lion roar in fierce discontent over a bone that gave him little promise of a good supper. Mark and Roxy as they walked homeward together did not meditate much on God's works which they had seen. They had, also, the misfortune to meet Mr. Whittaker returning, hungry and fagged, from his long tramp in the woods, and disappointed at having knocked in vain at the door of Roxy's house. A sudden pain smote the girl's heart. Had he been to see her? She remembered now what sordid arguments her aunt had used in favor of Mark, and she could hardly resist a feeling that she was betraying Whittaker and giving herself to Mark on account of Mark's worldly advantages. Indeed, this very rebellion against the aunt's advice had almost induced her

to decline Mark's invitation to go to the show. And then she remembered that the time for her reply to Whittaker was but two days off, and how could she maintain a judi cial frame of mind if she kept Mark's company. But he had pleaded that he needed some recreation, there was not much that was pleasant left for him. And Roxy's heart had seconded its pleading, for the more she talked with him of his plans, and pitied him in his prospective trials, so much the more she loved him. She was a romancer, like all girls of her age, only her romances had a religious coloring. If she could have felt a hearty pity for Whittaker, or painted pictures of possible self-immolations for him, she might have loved him. But he had never said a word about any sacrifices that he had made. Is it any wonder that the impulsive, romantic, self-pitying Mark should have made the deepest impression? Was there not also a latent feeling that Bonamy needed her influence? For all strong women like to feel that they are necessary to somebody, and your pitiful and philanthropic woman wants somebody to be sorry for.

Nevertheless, at sight of the fagged and anxious face of the young minister, she was smitten with pain, and she lapsed into a melancholy from which Mark could not arouse her. Once or twice she answered him with just a spice of contradictoriness. Mark had meant to open his whole heart to her that very afternoon. Now he thought that he had in some way offended. He bade her good-bye at the gate, and walked slowly homeward through the long shadows of the evening, trying to guess what he had done to give offense. If Roxy could have decided the debate in her heart as most girls would have done, according to her inclination, there would have been no more halting. But the vision of Whittaker's troubled face made her hesi

tate, and then the scrupulous habit of her mind made everything that was pleasant seem to be wrong. Because she loved Mark she feared that she ought not to have him. In imitation of the early Methodist saints she sought to decide this matter, not by using her judgment, but by waiting for some supernatural impulse or some outward token.

"Choose my way for me, O Lord!" she wrote in her diary that evening.

And yet with all her praying she was in a fair way to make her own choice. There is nothing so blind as love, there is nothing so given to seeing. It will get even from heaven the vision it seeks.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SUMMER STORM.

Mr. Whittaker was tired, dispirited, and dinnerless, and where one is fagged, hungry, and depressed, the worst seems most probable. To him it was clear that Bonamy and Roxy were as good as engaged. He was almost glad that he had not found Roxy at home when he called on his return from the woods. What Bonamy could want with a wife, or how he could support one, in his wild journey to Texas, Whittaker could not imagine. But then the whole proceeding of dispatching an impulsive young lawyer without theological training, on a mission, was ridiculous enough to the well-regulated mind of a New Englander. In New England he had looked to Indiana as the fag-end of Heathendom itself, but here the Indiana people were sending a missionary into the outer darkness beyond. For himself, he was, as yet, by no means sure of Bonamy's conversion. But the question of the harm he might do to Bonamy was not the only one that touched him now. Partly from scruple, partly from discouragement, partly on account of a wounded pride, and partly from a sense of injury, he determined to settle the matter once for all. To a man accustomed to act with simplicity and directness, any hesitation, any complexity and entanglement of motives, is purgatory. And a bewildered and badgered human soul will sometimes accept the most desperate alternative for the sake of escaping from per-

plexity. Misery, simple and absolute, is sometimes better than compound suspense.

The tavern bell was already ringing its vesper when Whittaker pushed open the white gate and walked up the graveled walk in front of the Lefaure cottage. He ate his supper in a voracious and almost surly silence. When Lefaure remarked that the heat was oppressive and that there were signs of a thunder-storm, Whittaker roused himself only at the close of the sentence which he dimly perceived was addressed to himself.

"What say?" he asked, using a down-east cut-off in his speech that seemed almost offensive to his friend. The host repeated his remark about the weather and Whittaker, whose attention had already lapsed, again revived himself sufficiently to answer that he believed he was and went on eating.

The letter he wrote in that sultry evening was a simple and unexplained withdrawal of his offer of marriage. Whittaker sealed it and went out. The twilight sky was already stained with a black cloud sweeping upward from the west; little puffs of dust rose here and there in fitful eddies as the sultry air anticipated the coming gust with nervous twitchings. But the young minister cared for no cloud but the one in his own heart. He hurried on through the deepening gloom past one or two of the old Swiss houses, under the shadow of a great barn-like brick dwelling popularly called the White Hall, which had been built by an overgrown merchant who had since failed. Then he mechanically crossed the open lots into the main street and did not pause until he had dropped the letter in the box. He had hardly turned toward home when there came a sudden clap of thunder. The wind and rain struck the village almost at once; the twilight was gone in an in

stant; and it was with no little pains and stumbling that Whittaker at last found his way back through the drenching storm to his own room. The wild irregular dashing of the wind against the window, the roaring of the summer rain upon the roof, and the gurgling rush of the water in the tin leaders made a strange and stormy harmony with the minister's perturbed emotions. The tired man at last slept soundly. When he awoke in the gray dawn the tempest had spent itself. There were traces of the wind in broken branches of trees here and there, the roads were submerged by pools of water and the gutters and gullies were choke full. But the air was clear and fresh and Whittaker threw open his window and watched the first beams of the sun as they turned the gray clouds to orange and yellow and blazed upon the river's ripples in a line of gold.

"It is a pleasant morning," he said to Twonnet, when she appeared in the yard below drawing water from the cistern with the old-fashioned hook. "The storm has cleared the air."

Something in his own words did him good, for indeed the storm had cleared the air. Through the dull, lingering pain which he felt, there came a grateful sense of relief and just a hope of final victory. He was thankful. For once he neglected to "say his prayers." One never needs the form of devotion so little as when the spirit is spontaneously devout.

Nevertheless, there was for many a month a vague sense of suffering throughout his whole being, that depression about the nerve-centers which may come from any disappointment, but which is more aggravated in its form and persistency when the disappointment has to do with the affections. Friends of the sufferer declare the pain a most unreasonable one. Isn't every disease unreasonable?

One would as well argue against dyspepsia. Of what good is it to assure a disappointed lover that there are as many fish in the sea as ever were caught? Loving differs from fishing precisely in this, that in love the sea has but the one fish; the rest are all contemptible.

For weeks Whittaker's sermons were prepared in a dul way, and preached listlessly. He even lost interest in the raging battle between the old school and the new, and for a while he cared little for the difference between partial atonement and universal. His few theological books were untouched. One symptom of his disease was a disposition to quarrel with Highbury. He took grounds in opposition to the elder's well-known opinions at every opportunity, saying exasperating things on such slight occasions, and resenting so sharply every attempt of the elder to advise him about anything that Highbury seriously debated whether he should not move for the minister's dismissal. There was one obstacle, however; that was the Home Missionary Society. It might withdraw its assistance in case of difficulty. But Whittaker did not think of the Home Missionary Society, or anything else that could shield him from the elder's wrath. He rather craved a controversy than shirked it. He even read and expounded those offensive sayings of Christ about the difficulty of entrance into the kingdom of heaven which a rich camel laden with many costly burdens is sure to encounter.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROXY'S DECISION.

WHITTAKER's letter did not reach Roxy. Letters with out direction cannot find their destination. In his profound agitation Whittaker had forgotten to direct it and it went wandering away to the stupid old dead-letter office of that day, where, in a pile of miscarried love-letters, business notes, idle epistles and family bulletins, it was solemnly burned. Roxy never knew why Whittaker did not come to hear her yes or no, but she was glad that he did not.

She had to make her decision in her own way. Which was to fancy that the decision was made for her. When she prayed the image of Mark Bonamy stood before her. Was not Miss Bosanquet of blessed memory guided in the same way to the choice of the saintly Fletcher of Madeley? At other times texts of scripture were strongly "suggested" to her mind. The answer of Ruth to Naomi, the passage about giving up houses and lands and father and mother, and the vocation of Paul—"Behold I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles"—all came to her mind at times when she could not track the association which brought them. Clearly they were suggestions. Why should she be disobedient to the heavenly voice?

Mark came to see her on the next evening but one after the day of the menagerie. He found her teaching Bobo

She had read somewhere or heard of the experiments then beginning to be made on the continent of Europe in the education of the feeble-minded. She had persuaded her father to make her a board with a triangular hole, a round hole and a square one. She had also three blocks made to fit the three holes. When Mark came in she was teaching the boy to set the blocks in their places and to know them by her descriptions. He was so pleased with his success in getting the three-cornered block into its place, that he was clapping his hands with delight when Mark entered. Bonamy had that sort of aversion to an invalid or an imbecile which inheres in some healthy constitutions. He therefore exaggerated the self-denial of Roxy in teaching her cousin.

She blushed a little when Mark came,—she could not have told why,—and begged that he would let her finish her lesson.

"Certainly, certainly," he answered.

"Certainly, certainly," cried Bobo as he lifted up and replaced the triangular block in the aperture.

"Now the square one," said Roxy.

"Now the square one," responded the boy, at the same time laying hold of the circular block.

"No," said Roxy.

"No," answered the pupil putting down the block and taking the other.

"That's the square one."

"That's the square one," he cried, trying to force it into the round hole.

"No, no! the square hole!"

"No, no! the square hole!" And then he looked at Roxy vacantly. At last, catching her meaning, he clapped the square block on the square hole. But Roxy had to

take hold of his hand and turn it round until the block fitted to its place.

"Hurra! that's it!" cried the teacher, clapping her hands in great glee—a demonstration that was quickly imitated by the triumphant pupil.

"How slowly he must learn," said Mark. "It will take you a week to teach him to place those blocks."

"I've been at it a week already. It will take at least a month. You see the first steps are the hardest. When he has learned this lesson I shall have a lot of blocks, all one shape but of different colors. The rims of the holes will be colored to match. When he has learned those, I shall have both shapes and colors various. I was afraid I could not teach him at all, but he has already learned to know the round block. See!"

With this Roxy took all the blocks out and put them together.

"Now, Bobo, the round one."

"Now, Bobo, the round one," echoed the lad, squeezing the fingers of his right hand with his left, and rocking to and fro in indecision, and knitting his brows with mental effort. At last he reached out, timidly lifted the square block, then timidly took up the round one, looked up to make sure that Roxy approved, then, after hovering a while over the three holes, he clapped it into the right one, receiving a burst of applause and a kiss from his teacher as a reward.

"How tedious it must be!" said Mark, amazed at Roxy's patience.

"Tedious? No. I shall make a man out of Bobo yet."

"Make a man out of Bobo yet," chuckled the little fellow, lifting the blocks and striving to fit them in their holes.

"I wish you were not quite so good," said Mark, in a sudden fit of humility.

Roxy did not answer. She had a desire to protest against the compliment, but the shadow of what Mark was about to say fell upon her, and she was silent. Bobo looked up in wonder and curiosity at her blushing face, then he went up and caressed her, saying, "Poor Roxy mus'n't cry."

Roxy pushed him away gently, and Bobo wandered into the yard leaving Roxy and her lover alone.

"If you were not so good I might hope to come back some day when Texas gets to be a little better, maybe, and take you out to help me. God knows I need help. I don't feel very sure of myself without you to strengthen me."

It was the same old cry for help. And all the more eloquent that it was utterly sincere. Was it that in this moment some doubt of Mark's stability crossed the soul of Roxy that she rose and walked to the little book-shelf and affected to arrange the few books that she might gain time? But the cry for help opened all the fountains of her love. Whether Mark was as good as she believed him to be or as unsteady as Twonnet thought him, she loved him with all her woman's soul. Be he good or bad, she felt now for the first time that she was his; that some force beside her will or judgment had decided for her. It was but a feeble effort she could make in favor of calmness or thought. She returned to her chair trembling and helpless.

"What do you say, Roxy?" Mark was standing waiting. For a minute not a word passed. Roxy knew that she was floating on a stream against which all rowing was futile. A new and hitherto unsuspected force in her ov

nature was bearing her away. Neither praying nor struggling availed. He already possessed her, but she could not tell him so. She did not debate any longer, she only floated in a dreamy, blissful state, waiting for him to understand what she dared not confess. At last he reached his hand and lifted hers which lay upon the arm of her chair. She had no sense of volition, but, as though his touch had given her a galvanic shock, she closed her hand on his and Mark understood.

Much depends on the stand-point from which a subject is viewed. Go and ask Colonel Bonamy, as he sits meditatively at his desk, his long gray locks gently fluttering in the summer wind. He will tell you that Mark is rather throwing himself away on a shoe-maker's daughter, and that the time may come when he will be sorry for it. Even the Christian virtues do not weigh in all scales alike.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BONAMY, SENIOR.

Bonamy the older walked up and down his office floor. It was a week after Mark's betrothal, and a hot, still, summer day, disturbed by nothing; for the drowsy sound of the distant hammering of the village smith could not be said to disturb anything. The elder Bonamy was a broad-shouldered, raw-boned man. His heavy chin was close-shaven, there was an under lip that indicated stubbornness, and a certain droop of the eyelids over his black eyes and a close-shutness of the mouth that stood for a secretiveness which knew by-ways to an end where highways were obstructed. But over the firmness and the shrewdness of his character a mantle was thrown by his innate dignity. He was one of those who treat themselves with sincere reverence. Now and then he stopped in his solitary pacing to and fro to look out of the open window of the office at the brass ball on the top of the court-house. But either because the brass ball, blazing in the summer's sun, did not give him the inspiration he sought, or for some other good and sufficient reason, he always uttered between his teeth, as he turned away from the window, an ejaculation which is in the English tongue accounted profane, and forbidden to be put down in books. The object of the colonel's cursing was an impersonal "it." What the "it" was which he wished to have put under malediction, an eavesdropper could not have guessed.

Colonel Bonamy was not an eloquent lawyer. It was not from him that Mark inherited his outspoken vehemence. Secretive men are good diplomatists, but a diplomatist is not often an orator He loved the struggle of litigation as he loved a game of poker. He fought now in this way, now in that way, now by sudden and abrupt attack, and again by ambuscade, sometimes by coo' and lofty assurance, sometimes by respectful considerateness, but by this or that he managed to win whenever success was within reach without compromise of his exterior dignity, which dignity was with him a make-shift for conscience. He studied the juries, their prejudices of politics or religion and their susceptibilities. He took them almost one by one, awing some, flattering others, reasoning with others. He was never brilliant, but he won his suits; defeat was the only thing in heaven or earth that he dreaded.

Those who knew his habits would have said that in the present instance he had a case in which he could not quite see his way to success. This striding up and down the floor, this staring with half shut eyes at the ball on the belfry, this short, abrupt, half smothered and rather uncharitable damning of the neuter pronoun, betokened a difficult case. But there were certainly no cases to perplex him until the "fall" term of the circuit court should come round. Neither had he been overthrown in his tilt at poker the night before. None the less was he wrestling with a hard problem. He had tried to "bluff" Mark and had failed. But all the more was he resolved to find some way to accomplish his purpose. Hence this striding to and fro, diagonally across the office. For do not the legs pump blood into the brain? And hence, too, this staring at the brass ball, and this swearing at some undefined "it."

The colonel had just uttered his little curse [illegible] the dozenth time, when the lank Lathers darkened, in a perpendicular way, the threshold of the open door. Some business about a subpœna was the occasion for his call. The aristocratic lawyer and the rude Lathers were a fine contrast of the patrician and the plebeian in manner and appearance. When Lathers had finished his errand, and stood again in the open door about to depart, he said:

"Mark, don't come home early these nights, I 'low, Colonel."

"I don't know," answered the diplomatic lawyer.

"Seems to me, Colonel,—but then 'taint none of my business," and the sheriff passed out into the hot sunshine.

"Come back, Lathers," said Bonamy, adding to the invitation his half-smothered oath, fired in the air at nobody in particular.

"What the dickens do you mean? Has Mark been doing anything worse than going to those confounded Methodist meetings?" And the colonel took a turn toward the window, and another pull at the economical and non-committal little curse. It was a vent to nervous irritation.

"Well, I don' know what you call wuss and what you call better. Texas and preachings and girls is awfully mixed up in Mark's head—a sort of jumble, like a Fourth of July speech, or the sermon of a red-hot young exhauster and the like, you know. But I reckon it'll clarify, as the old woman said of the duck-puddle when she spilled her eggs into it."

"What girls do you think of, that Mark likes?"

"Oh! last summer it was that Kirtley witch, now it's

Tom Adams's Roxy. She's the very angel Gabriel, and the like, you know."

"Oh, well, I didn't know but it was something worse. Every young man has to be a fool about something. You and I, we had our turn, Major." And Bonamy smiled condescendingly.

"We rekivered mighty devilish airly though, Colonel, and we haint had many relapses. Playing poker with an old hand like you is my very worst, Colonel. When I do that I'm like Samson in the lion's den." And with this the sheriff departed, smiling.

Colonel Bonamy had treated Lathers's communication with dignified indifference, but Lathers knew how to estimate this affectation. He had seen the colonel's immovable face when he lost and when he won at poker.

"He's mad as a black bear," said Lathers to himself. And when, half an hour later, he saw the lawyer enter the shop of Adams, he was confirmed in his surmise.

"What cut is the old fellow taking?" was the question that Lathers could not answer. That Bonamy meant to break off Mark's attachment to Roxy he did not doubt, but how?

"He's powerful deep, that Colonel Bonamy. He's deeper'n the Old Boy." It was thus he comforted himself for his inability to guess what was the old lawyer's line of attack.

Nevertheless, he saw his opportunity to serve his own ends. He watched for Mark and took him aside to tell him that the old man was "lookin' after" his love affairs, and had been "inquirin' round" about Mark's attachment to Roxy. For his part, he disapproved of "meddlin'" and the like, and felt bound, as an old friend of Mark's, to give him a sly hint and the like, you know,

that the old man had been over to see Adams on the subject. Whereupon Mark, of course, grew red in the face. Was he not able to settle such matters for himself? It is a way we civilized men have. We are all able to take care of ourselves in love affairs when we are young, and when we get old, we are all convinced of the inability of other folks in youth, to look out for themselves.

CHAPTER XXIV

BY THE FLANK.

When Lathers had left Colonel Bonamy, the old man did not look at the blazing brass ball any more, but looked steadily at the floor as he resumed his pacing to and fro. He thrust his hands into the pockets of his brown linen trowsers and laughed inaudibly.

"*By*—George!" The colonel drew the first word out to its fullest length and then cut the other off short and sharp, with a faint inward chuckle at the end. It was his note of triumph. There was then a road out of this embarrassment about a son who had the misfortune to inherit a streak of moral enthusiasm from his mother. It was a favorite maxim with the old lawyer: "concede small points to carry large ones."

"I will give him his first point and gain the suit," he soliloquized. Then after a while he came out with an appeal to some private deity of his own whom he called "Godomighty." For the colonel was rather full of such words for a man who was an ostentatious disbeliever in any god.

When he had looked at his empty Franklin stove a while he suddenly became interested in his boots. He lifted his left foot and examined the sole carefully, then he looked at the right one, then he took his beaver hat from the mantel-piece and went out into the scorching heat of the summer afternoon. The little shop of Mr.

Adams stood in the main street which ran toward the river; there were higher buildings all about it, but it had held its place for more than a generation, having been a store, and the only one in the town at the beginning. It was in some sense the germ cell from which all the trade of the place had grown. The door of the old shoe-shop was wide open, the smell of leather diffused itself into the street without, and scraps and bits from the shop were scattered as far as the gutter. The meditative Adams sat doubled together, hammering vigorously upon a bit of leather. Did his trade give him his sturdy speech? Of all mechanical occupations, that of the shoe-maker is the most favorable to reflection and to vehement expression. Adams hammered theories, as he did the leather on his lap-stone.

By Adams's side sat little Ben Boone, an illegitimate child in a family doomed to poverty in all its generations. There are whole races of people who have a genius for wretchedness; it comes to them as a vocation.

"Why don't you take the shoe and go?" demanded the shoe-maker sternly, pausing in his hammering.

"Gran'mother says she can't pay you till——"

"Go 'long with you, and don't say another word," burst out the shoe-maker.

The boy started out, frightened into silence.

"Stop!" called the shoe-maker, relenting. "Tell your grandmother when the shoe gives out again, to send it to me. Don't take my work over to Jim Hone's shop. Here's some leather to make a whirligig of. Go, now. Out with you!"

"Aha!" said Bonamy, as he entered the shop. "I didn't know you kept charity customers."

"Charity! pshaw! You know, Colonel, that I'm a fool

"WIDOWERS ARE DEBARRED

to give away time and good leather to shiftless people like the Booles. And if you had the politeness that people say you have, you would not twit me with it. We all have our weaknesses."

"I don't know," said Bonamy, who was, as usual, left by the ambiguousness of Adams's tone, in a perplexing doubt as to whether he were jesting or quarreling,—a doubt which Adams was generally unable to solve himself. "I don't know about that, Mr. Adams. I have out-grown most of mine, and yours seem to be very commendable ones."

Saying this, the colonel took a seat on the vacant bench, which was occupied in busy seasons by a journeyman. He sat down on this low bench, among bits of leather, pegs, wax, lasts, hammers and what-nots, with all of his accustomed stateliness, gently lifting his coat-tails and posing his tall figure by the side of the stooped and grizzled shoemaker, with an evident sense of his picturesqueness.

"That boot needs a few pegs in the hollow of the foot, I think."

"Widowers are dreadful particular, Colonel. There's nothing much the matter with the boot."

"You forget that you're a widower, too. But young folks are likely to beat us. They do say now that my Mark and your Roxy —— "

"Are a couple of fools," cried the irascible shoe-maker, stung by something in Bonamy's tone which he interpreted to mean that the house of Adams ought to feel very much flattered by its present juxtaposition, in the gossip of the village, with the house of Bonamy.

"I agree with you," said the lawyer.

"For two fools like them to be talking of going to Texas to carry the Gospel is an outrage. I think Texas 'll

convert the missionary instead of the missionary converting Texas. It's bad enough for Mark to make a foo of himself. I wish he would go to Texas and be done with it, and not turn Roxy's head."

"Do you really think they care for each other?" put in the lawyer, diplomatically.

"Mark would be a fool, sir, if he didn't like Roxy And what does he mean by all his attentions if he doesn't care for her? He ought to be shot if he doesn't care. I've half a mind to interfere and break it up. I would if I was the man I ought to be."

"Between you and me, I don't think Mark 'll go. I'm glad he likes Roxy. It will keep him at home."

"She's as crazy as he is," said Adams. "These Methodists have made loons out of both of them."

"Well, we 'll see." And after a minute the old lawyer took back his boot, in which a few pegs had been tightened, drew it on and sauntered out of the shop, and thence down the street and around the corner to his office. Mark sat writing at his own desk in the office, full of anger at what Lathers had told him.

"Mark!" said the father.

"Sir," answered the son, using the respectful word prescribed in the code of manners of Western and Southern society, but uttering it in anything but a decent tone.

"You've really made up your mind to go to Texas?"

"Of course I have."

"They tell me you've been paying attention to Tom Adams's Roxy."

"I think you might speak a little more respectfully of a lady that I have paid attentions to."

"Can't you answer me in a Christian spirit, young

man?" said the colonel, adding a gentle blasphemy to this appeal.

"Well, I think I can attend to my own love affairs."

"I suppose you can. But how in the name of the Old Boy, will you keep a wife on a hundred dollars a year, on the Brazos River?"

"I don't propose to take a wife with me."

"Then what in thunder are you making love to Tom Adams's—to Roxy Adams for?"

"I wish you would let me manage my own affairs," said Mark, scowling.

"Oh, of course! But sometimes an old man's advice *is* worth having, even if the old man does happen to be an infidel. A father is entitled to some respect even from Christians, I suppose."

The young man was silent.

"Now, I believe you don't intend to go for six weeks or so. If you must go, marry a good wife; Tom Adams's daughter—excuse me, Miss Roxy Adams—will do."

"How can I, as you said, on a hundred a year?"

"Why, I propose, if you must go out there, to take care of you. I'll do better than the church. I'll see 'em that and go one better. Three hundred dollars is a large sum in Texas. I don't want you to go out there and die. With a wife you'll stand some chance of living. You can think it over, consult the girl and let me know." With that he took up his pen to begin writing.

Mark was full of surprise. His first thought was that this offer gave him a chance of escape from the dire necessity of leaving Roxy. His second feeling was one of shame that he had treated his father so cavalierly He rose impulsively and said,

"I beg your pardon for speaking as I did. You are very kind." And he held out his hand.

But the elder did not look up. He uttered something about the devil, and said that it was all right, of course.

Mark left the office full of cheerfulness. The gift horse was too valuable to be examined closely. Such is the case generally in the matter of gift horses, notwithstanding the bitter experience of the Trojans.

The wily old lawyer, when once the young man was gone, relaxed his face into a noncommittal smile, and ejaculated the name of his heathen divinity again.

CHAPTER XXV.

SAINT THERESA OF THE HONEYSUCKLES.

Mystic that she was, Roxy was ever looking for some celestial communication. To such a nature, heaven is all about. There are no accidents; the angels minister in whatever befalls. So when Mark came, he found her with the old gladness shining from her face, singing with irrepressible spontaneity and the delicious melody of a Virginia wood-robin. Nothing could be more inspiriting than the martial enthusiasm and fire of fine sincerity with which she rendered Charles Wesley's hymn, beginning:

> "Jesus, the name high over all,
> In hell, or earth, or sky,
> Angels and men before it fall
> And devils fear and fly."

Mark came into hearing as she concluded the singing of the first verse, and he paused involuntarily to hear the rest. Roxy omitted the next stanza, and struck into the third, which exactly fitted her mood:

> "Oh, that the world might taste and see
> The riches of his grace,
> The arms of love that compass me
> Would all mankind embrace."

The rich voice gave a new meaning to the words, and Bonamy could see in her face, framed in the honeysuckle

that grew over the window, the reflex of all she sang, as she plied her needle and rocked slowly to and fro. Again she skipped—she was thinking of the dangers of life in Texas, perhaps, but she dropped now to the last verse of the hymn, and Charles Wesley himself would have found new meaning in his own words, could he have heard her sing, in a tone now soft and low, but full of pathetic exultation still:

> "Happy, if with my latest breath,
> I may but gasp his name,
> Preach him to all, and cry in death,
> Behold, behold the Lamb!"

While she sang these words, Bonamy came softly into the yard and walked up to the window, pulling aside the honeysuckles. Roxy was not startled. Mark had been so present in her imaginings that it seemed to the rapt girl the most natural thing in the world to see him standing there looking at her, with his face suffused with emotion.

"A body could suffer and die, with you to strengthen," he said.

"No, with God. It is God that gives me this desire to suffer or to die for him. I know it is given for something, but I must wait until the way is open for me."

"The way is opened to-day. Before New Year's, I hope that you and I will be carrying out the spirit of that hymn in the republic of Texas."

"Why? How? Come in and tell me."

Mark went in, and, saluting her with a lover's warmth, told her what his father had said. Help from this quarter was just the most miraculous thing in the world. The Maid of Orleans was not more sure of a divine vocation, than was Roxy at that moment. She pushed her chair

back from the window, beckoned Mark to kneel down with her, and then, with the enthusiasm of Saint Theresa when she sought in childhood a martyrdom among the Moors, Roxy poured out thanks to God for the inestimable privilege of suffering, and perhaps of dying, for the Lord.

Mark left Roxy when the tavern bell was ringing its muezzin call to supper. He went away as he always left her presence, in a state of sympathetic exaltation, which would have lasted him until he could have sunned himself again in her religious experience, had it not been that in his walk toward home, he met Haz Kirtley. The sight of the drayman disturbed his complacency with recollections of his past failures. He had no fear now of any enticement from Nancy, but he was growing a little more distrustful of himself, in a general way. A lurking feeling that underneath this missionary Mark was a treacherous other self, capable of repeating the follies of the past, troubled him. He longed for Texas, not as of old to leave Nancy behind, but because he felt, as who does not, that a great change in circumstance would help to make a change in him. He forgot, as we all forget, that the ugly self is not to be left behind. There is no way but to turn and face a foe who must needs be mess-mate and bed-fellow with us to the very end.

That night, at supper, Amanda, the elder of the sisters Bonamy, told Mark that he would better learn to make shoes. This obscure allusion to the trade of Roxy's father was meant for wit and sarcasm, but to Amanda's surprise, her father took up for Mark. Roxy Adams was a fine girl,—a little too pious, but at least that was not a common fault with girls. And Janet, the impulsive younger sister, said she wished Mark would marry Roxy. She had such a handsome face, with a glad look shining out from behind

"What a little goose you are!" said the dignified Amanda; "did ever anybody hear such nonsense?—a glad look shining out from behind! Silly! For my part, I don't like a girl that is always smiling."

"But she don't smile. She only looks glad," persisted Janet.

"As if anybody could look glad without smiling! Let's see you try."

"Oh, I can't! It's just like before the sun comes up in the morning,—the hills on the other side of the river show the bright sky through the trees, the water looks like gold, the houses seem to stand out with light all around them, in a splendid kind of a way. It's sunshine just agoing to come, like Roxy's smile, that isn't quite a smile, you know."

The father laughed, as he might have laughed at baby-talk. Mark patted the girl on the shoulder, with:

"A poet in the family, I declare."

"A goose in the family," said Amanda. "A smile that isn't quite a smile is a sensible remark! You'd better go to school to Roxy. She's teaching one idiot now, and I don't know but she's got two." This last with a look at Mark.

As for Mrs. Hanks, she was not quite satisfied when she heard of the arrangement. She thought the colonel should have insisted on Mark's staying at home. But he would come to be somebody yet,—a presiding elder and maybe a bishop. She was glad, for her part, that Roxy had taken her advice. It was a good deal better than marrying a Presbyterian, anyhow. Roxy would have a good and talented husband, and a Methodist, with real heart religion.

"Wait till the pie is cut before you say whether they're

blackberries, or elderberries, or pisen poke-berries insides," said Jemima.

Twonnet tried to think the best when Roxy told her. But the knowledge that Roxy had of her friend's opinion of Mark was a wedge of estrangement between them They visited each other, but their intercourse became more and more constrained. Each blamed the other for the cooling of a friendship which they had often vowed should be eternal. In such gradual dissolutions of eternal friendships, each party, feeling herself innocent, is sure that the other must be censurable. They never think of falling out with those deep and irresistible currents in human nature before the force of which we are all helpless.

The whole town was agitated by the news of the engagement. For it was news. What battles and bankruptcies are to a metropolis, such are marriages and deaths to a village. The match-makers were generally pleased; for there was romance in the wild stories of how Colonel Bonamy had quarreled with his son about going to Texas, but had finally consented to the marriage and the mission. It was generally agreed that the old man was not "nigh so hard-hearted since his wife died." He might get over his infidelity yet, some day—though he did swear dreadful, you know. Some thought that he meant to run for Congress, and wanted to get Mark out of the way and purchase the favor of the Methodists, at the same time.

Mr. Highbury was delighted that his own words had weighed with Whittaker, and Mrs. Highbury rocked her little fat body to and fro, lifting her toes off the floor each time, and rhythmically echoed Mr. Highbury's opinion that no man ought to preach without a theological education.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A PANTHER.

Jim McGowan, of Rocky Fork, who had felt keenly his insecurity in the affections of Nancy Kirtley ever since the advent of young Bonamy on his electioneering trip, heard of Mark's engagement with relief. He had brought a load of wood to town and sold it to old Mrs. Tartrum, the ideal town gossip, who assailed the very children upon the street with persistent catechisms about the affairs of their parents, and whose love of hearing was only equaled by her love of telling. In the absence of any other uninformed hearer, she poured the whole story of the colonel's opposition and the colonel's arrangement and Amanda's "dudgeon," into the ears of the eager Jim McGowan, while he was throwing a cord of ash wood over her back fence. She added the information that the Bonamys were a regular big fish family, and that it was a great rise for a poor girl.

Jim drove home in a state of glorification. He was sure that Nancy would be humble enough now. She had always been gracious to him in proportion to Bonamy's remoteness. Now that Bonamy was gone entirely, Nancy would set her lines for Jim more carefully than ever. He would hold back, and let her see how it felt to be kept off. It was her turn to fish a while. Jim McGowan is not the only man who finds, to his sorrow, just when he thinks he understands, that he has not begun to understand a woman.

Jim was a little distant with Nancy. She was looking her best in a new calico, for she had seen him go down in the morning. It was all the poor fellow could do to keep up his lofty and half-injured air. He wanted to introduce the news he had to tell in an accidental way, as though it were a matter of indifference to him. But the girl was so dazzling that he could not well keep his head.

Nancy Kirtley was a flower of that curious poor-white race which is called "tar-heel" in the northern Carolina, "sand-hiller" in the southern, "corn-cracker" in Kentucky, "yahoo" in Mississippi, and in California "Pike." They never continue in one stay, but are the half gypsies of America, seeking by shiftless removals from one region to another to better their wretched fortunes, or, more likely, to gratify a restless love of change and adventure. They are the Hoosiers of the dark regions of Indiana and the Egyptians of southern Illinois. Always in a half-barbarous state, it is among them that lynchings most prevail. Their love of excitement drives them into a daring life and often into crime. From them came the Kentucky frontiersmen, the Texan rangers, the Murrell highwaymen, the Arkansas regulators and anti-regulators, the ancient keel-boatmen, the more modern flat-boatmen and raftsmen and roustabouts, and this race furnishes, perhaps, more than its share of the "road agents" that infest the territories. Brave men and generous men are often found among them; but they are never able to rise above Daniel Boones and Simon Kentons. Beautiful women, of the magnificent, swarthy, half-oriental, animal sort, spring now and then from this stock, and of these Nancy was one,—a perfect gypsy queen of beauty as she stood there that day and set poor McGowan wild. She was more cordial than usual, and the poor, distracted

fellow found himself prone to receive gratefully so much sunshine Getting desperate, he came out at last with:

"Nancy, you remember that air Mark Bonamy that come foolin' roun' here last year, runnin' fer the legislater?"

"I 'low *you* ricollect him, Jim. You've been mad enough about him ever since. And you got fined over't Republican meetin'-house for disturbin' his meetin'. And I'll bet he don't forgit me." With that Nancy tossed back her abundant dark-brown hair and threw out her chin in a saucy, triumphant fashion that set her lover wild. "I haint a gal to be forgot easy, now, am I, Jim? And he's a feller worth while," she added, getting up and posing her magnificent figure on the hearth where Jim could see to the best advantage her perfect shape, her great black eyes with a soft sensuous droop in them, her rich complexion, her well-set red lips and white teeth.

"What a creetur you air, Nance!" cried Jim, leaning forward in a frantic state of mingled love and despair. "I was going to tell you some news, but I sha'n't if you go on that way."

"What way, Jim? Don't be a fool about Bonamy jest because he's so handsome. What about him? Is he coming out here to see me? I wish he would. He's as big a fool as you air."

"I 'low I'd better go," said Jim, rising with an air of offense, but sure that his news would humble Nancy. "All they is about it is that Mark Bonamy is goin' to marry shoe-maker Adams's girl, and both on 'em is off fer Texas in a month or two It aint no matter of mine, you know, but I knowed you'd keer, seein' you was so all-fired sweet to him"

Nancy bridled proudly.

"I'll show you whether he'll marry that girl or not, dog-on her." She turned to the high mantel-shelf and lifted an old tin cup which was turned upside down, and picked up a watch seal.

"May be you don't know who give me that?" she said, with her great black eyes snapping fire triumphantly under her dark brows. Then she seized from the other end of the shelf a red morocco Testament. "May be you kin read writin', Jim. I can't. But that's his name. I'm agoin' off to Luzerne to-morry mornin'. And you look at me, Jim." Here she straightened herself up proudly, and her swarthy, almost oriental, beauty became more wonderful when her whole countenance was lit up with defiance.

"How long kin Roxy Adams stan' agin me? Look at me, Jim, and say whether I'm purty or not. You come here saying to yourself: 'Now, when that Nancy hears that Bonamy's clean gone she'll be down on her knees to me.' Jest as ef I haint got more beaus than I kin count. Jim McGowan, you may jest go to thunder, the quicker the better." And she turned fiercely away.

Jim saw his defeat too clearly to tarry. With a few testy words of retort he made his way out to his wagon and started home. But ever as he drove over the rough road of Rocky Fork he recalled the vision of the fierce, dark, magnificent woman standing on the hearth and stamping her foot as she dismissed him. And over and over in his mind he compared her to a panther, thinking aloud as men of his class are prone to do.

"Blamed ef she haint a painter. A regler painter, teeth an' claws an' all, by hokey! Looked jest like a painter ready to spring on me and tear me all to flinders. And that's what she is, painter an' nothin' else. But gosh! she's a splendid creetur! Confound her picter."

CHAPTER XXVII.

NANCY IN TOWN.

The solitary horse of the Kirtley family was in use in the corn-field. Only one more day's work was needed to "lay by" the field, but Nancy had come to be dictator; so instead of being hitched to the plow, old Bob was side-saddled for Nancy. The old woman scolded, but the arrangement suited the father as well as it did the daughter—it gave him an excuse for spending the day at the grocery in Canaan, a promised land comprising three drinking-places and a shoe-shop. All the way up and down the hills to town Nancy turned over and over again in her mind various plans of attack. To exhibit the keepsakes to Roxy asserting an engagement between Mark and herself might serve her purpose far enough to break off the marriage with Roxy, but it would probably anger Bonamy and defeat her main hope. She was shrewd enough to see that if she should threaten Mark, or attack him in any way, all expedients for entrapping him would fail. She therefore resolved to keep vindictive measures till the last.

Her first objective point was an interview with Mark, and to this end she seated herself in his office, early in the afternoon, and awaited his entrance. When he appeared on the door-step she was offended to note that he drew back for a moment as though he would fain avoid meeting her. For Mark had just been licensed to preach, the

day before, and with a freshened sense of his responsibility, not only to God but to the public, he was chagrined to come upon Nancy lying in wait. He greeted her as "Sister Kirtley," after the inflexible Methodist fashion of that day, but his friendliness went no further. She was piqued at this, and set herself to be attractive, but Mark was in no mood to be attracted. To dally with the belle of Rocky Fork at a hoe-down on Rocky Fork was easy enough; to have her obtrusive beauty thrust upon him, in his own office in Luzerne, when he had a brand new license to preach in his pocket, a mission to Texas in his mind and a fresh and most religious betrothal to a saint like Roxy Adams in his heart, was quite another thing. Besides he momently expected the advent of his father. What would the cynical old atheist say or do if he should find his pious son in such company? In his eager desire to be rid of her he was almost rude.

Entered after a while Bonamy the elder, who affected not to see the girl and who immediately absorbed himself in writing. But Nancy's observing vanity had detected the furtive glance with which the surprised senior had taken her in. She noted also the increased constraint of Mark, who now answered her in curt, half-defiant monosyllables.

Seeing that she was gaining nothing by blandishment she thought to try a little skillful intimidation. She began to feel for her handkerchief. But as a woman has but one pocket it often becomes a necessary and natural thing for her to remove the superimposed strata in order to reach those below. Nancy first pulled out the pocket-Testament Mark had given her in a moment of effusive zeal.

"Do you know that?" she said. "May be you don't

ricollect. Folks forgits their country friends mighty easy I pack this Testament around weth me all the time." She saw on Mark's face signs that the torture was working, and she was happy.

"I declar'! ef I haint got this weth me too," and she fished out the watch seal. "I hadn't oughter keep that in my pocket. I wouldn't lose it fer money," and she held it up and looked at it. "When folks talks about your marryin' somebody they don't know't I've got this purty thing in my pocket, do they?"

"Mark," said Colonel Bonamy, who had now heard enough to guess at the state of the case, "take this over to the clerk's office," handing a paper. "See that it is fixed up all right. Don't hurry." The junior started off. "Take plenty of time and be careful," the old man called after him.

Mark had turned toward his father with his face aflame with mortification. But the old man spoke dryly as though he were particularly interested in the business intrusted to his son. The young man had no doubt that his father had some ulterior purpose in thus sending him away, but he was so glad to be rid of his position between the uncomfortable Nancy on one side and the uncomfortable parent on the other, that he was quite willing to take the risk of his father's adroit cross-questioning of the girl. He could not divine what was Colonel Bonamy's purpose, but he knew that all the information that Nancy could give would be extracted in the interest of that purpose. When he arrived at the county clerk's office and opened the carefully folded paper, only to find to his confusion that it was blank, he understood that he had been sent out of the office to remain away until Nancy should depart. He made a bungling excuse to the clerk for having brought a

blank paper, but he drew a favorable augury from his father's action.

It was characteristic of the elder Bonamy that he did not begin to speak at once. He scratched a few lines with the pen, to put possible suspicions out of the mind of the witness, then began with commonplace remarks about her father and his local influence on Rocky Fork, proceeded with some very bold flatteries quite suited to the palate of the girl, who seriously began to debate, whether, failing the son, she should not try for the father. Then the old lawyer set her to talking about Mark; drew from her first one and then another particular of the young man's conduct; chuckled with her over her adroitness in capturing the watch-seal; took her side in the whole matter, laughed at Mark's piety; got out of her an account of the transfer of the Testament to her; led her off on an unsuspecting account of her other numerous triumphs; applauded her victory over McGowan; got her to boast in detail of the arts she made use of in capturing her admirers; drew out of her by piecemeal a statement of her motives in getting the Testament from Mark; and even, by espousing her side of the case, compelled an implied admission of her intent in coming to town at that time.

He had now given the fish all the line that seemed best It was time to reel in as he could. But while her complacent vanity was yet untouched by any suspicion of his purpose he made a vain endeavor to get possession of the Testament and watch-seal.

"No sir—no sir-ee— no-sir-ee, Bob!" cried the girl with a you-don't-catch-me air. She did not for a moment doubt that she could outwit any lawyer. She would show him!

"Oh, I only wanted to use it to plague Mark with. You see I'm determined to have *my* way with him."

But the girl was not at all sure that Colonel Bonamy's way was her way. She put the keepsakes back in her pocket, and then gave the pocket a little pat with her hand, as though she said: "Let him get them, if he can." This little dumb show did not escape Bonamy's quick observation, and he saw the hopelessness of trying to replevin the trinkets, only saying,

"You know what you're about, don't you?"

But he began cautiously to tighten the line. He questioned Nancy now in a harder tone, putting her conduct in a light not so favorable to herself. Seizing on points here and there, he grouped them so that they seemed ugly. Nancy became irritated and denied what she had said before. Then the lawyer, with a good-natured smile, that had just a tinge of something not so pleasant as a smile, pointed out the contradiction. It was vain that Nancy went into a passion—the lawyer was quiet, and even friendly. He wished to help her out of some vague legal difficulty and shameful disgrace that he pretended to see in store for her. For the first time in her life afraid to give vent to her wrath, contending as she never had before, with a man who cared no more for her blandishments than he feared her temper, and who was as superior to her in craft as in knowledge, with pride and vanity wounded, and without power to avenge the injury, or certainty even that there was any injury to avenge, she found herself badgered and hemmed in on every side. The lawyer made her words seem something else than she meant. She was not very scrupulous about telling the truth, but Colonel Bonamy, without saying anything discourteous, made her appear a monstrous liar, by giving back her words in senses different from what she had intended. At last, in sheer despair and defeat, she rose

to go, red with suppressed irritation, and biting her lips.

"Don't hurry," said the colonel. "Sit down. Mark will surely be here soon, and if he thinks as much of you as you seem to think he does, he'll be sorry to have you go while he is away. *You* say he is fond of you, and I suppose it is so, but you must not say one thing now and another after a while. Sit down."

Cowed by the steady, penetrating gaze of the old man's hard gray eyes, she sank back into the chair, to undergo again a process of mental and moral dissection, even more severe than that she had before experienced. Defeat is a thousand-fold worse to an overbearing person accustomed to triumph, than to another, and Nancy was by this time in a state of frenzy. She must break out in some desperate fashion, or die.

"Colonel Bonamy," she cried, getting to her feet, and looking now like a volcano in eruption. "What do you keep on axin an' axin sech questions fer? Confound yer lawyers' questions! You set me crazy, and make me out a liar in spite of myself. Go to thunder, I tell you, with yer blamed axin me this and axin me that. I'll do as I please, and say what I want to; you see if I don't, dog-on you!"

"I would," said the colonel, chuckling. "If I was pretty like you, I'd do as I pleased, too." And after a pause, he added, in an audible aside,—"if I went to penitentiary for it. Those trinkets of Mark's would do to begin suit against him in case he don't marry you, and I don't believe he will. But then, there's all the rest that gave you things,—let's see, McGowan, and Jackson, and Lumbkin, and Billings, and all of them. It might go awful hard with you, if it could be proved you were en

gaged to so many at once. That's more'n the law allows. You know there's a law against a girl being engaged to so many at once. Let's see, how many was it all at once that you said? McGowan, that's one, and Jackson is two, and——"

"I'm agoin'; blamed if I haint! I don't want no more jaw, lawyers or no lawyers. I'm one as can take keer of myself, anyhow!"

"Well, I'm sorry you won't wait longer. Mark'll be back——"

But Nancy was already going out of the door, crying with vexation.

The colonel went after her. He wanted to say just one thing more, he told her. She stopped, and he held her by his awful gray eyes while he asked, severely:

"Did you say, or didn't you say, that Major Lathers was at your house the night you say you danced with Mark?"

"Your axin questions ag'in, an' I wont stan' no more of yer axin, I tell you! You may ax tell ye're blind."

"You'd better answer that. Remember I know all about these things, now. You've told me yourself."

"No, you don't. I sha'n't tell you whether Lathers was there or not. You're just windin' me up and windin' me up, with yer axin. You may ax tell yer blind."

"Was Lathers at your house the night you say you danced with Mark? You say so. I don't know whether it is so or not. You don't always tell the same story. It mayn't be true."

"I tell you it is true, you old—you old——"

"Well, what? Speak right out. It'll do you good. I'm an old what?"

But Nancy checked herself, and kept down her epithets, fearing something, she could not tell what.

"I was going to give you some good advice," proceeded Bonamy. "But it don't matter to me what becomes of you, if you talk that way. I don't believe now that Mark danced with you at all."

"You don't, hey? You jest go right straight and ax Major Lathers. Didn't he try to keep Mark from dancin' with me? He'll tell you all about it."

"Oh, that's what I wanted to know—whether Lathers was there or not. You've told me now."

"No, I haint, nuther."

"Why, how could Lathers tell me about Mark's dancing with you, and how could he try to keep Mark from dancing with you, if he was not there? But I won't tell Lathers," he added, as though in a half soliloquy, "for I don't want to get you into trouble. You know he's sheriff, and the sheriff takes up people. If I should tell him you were in town now——. But you said he was there that night, didn't you?"

"I haint agoin' to talk to you no more. You'll make me tell more'n I ever know'd, in spite of myself, with yer everlastin' talkin' an' talkin', an' axin an' axin. Go long with yer old——"

But Nancy did not finish her sentence. Bonamy had cowed her so that she feared she knew not what of defeat and mortification if she should say another word, and she was utterly choked with vexation.

Colonel Bonamy had at least made sure that Nancy would carry no confidences to the ingenious sheriff. His vague hints had excited an undefined fear in her ignorant mind, already cowed by the badgering and tormenting course of cross-questioning to which she had been subjected. The whole machinery of the law was incomprehensible by her, and she was not sure but that Major

Lathers, if he should come to know how many engaged lovers she had had at one time, might send the jury to arrest her, whereupon she would be in danger of being tried by a lot of lawyers and colonels, and then locked up by the judge.

She went back to Haz Kirtley's full of wrath, but all her ferocity was dammed up and turned back in a flood of bitterness upon herself. So entirely had the lawyer daunted her that she even feared to resort to her extreme revenge of an interview with Roxy. Roxy might triumph over her also, exulting in her own success. She sullenly put the saddle on old Bob and rode away up the hill, stopping at the top to shake her fist and threaten that she would yet come back and tell that good-for-nothing town girl something that would make her hate Mark Bonamy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

EVERMORE.

Mrs. Hanks offered to make a wedding for Roxy. She was quite willing to increase her own social importance by this alliance of Roxy's. But the bride would not have her aunt's fine wedding. She did not want a fine wedding at all. To marry the hero she worshiped and then to start hand in hand with him to the wildest and savagest country they could find, there to live and labor for the rescue of the souls of wicked people, entirely satisfied her ambition.

She did not like to accept a wedding from her aunt, for Roxy's humility was purely a religious humility; her pride was quick; to be poor did not trouble her—to be patronized was intolerable, most of all to be patronized by Mrs. Hanks. And had Roxy been willing, Adams would have refused; all his native crookedness was intensified by his antipathy to his sister-in-law. But Roxy accepted from her aunt the loan of Jemima, whose hands rendered an energetic assistance, but whose tongue could not be quite still. Instead of denouncing Mark in particular, she now gave way to philippics against men in general. Roxy's dreams of a lodge in some vast wilderness, with Mark's love to comfort her and a semi-martyrdom to glorify her, were rudely disturbed by Jemima's incessant exposition of the faithlessness and selfishness of the "male sect," as she called it. "They can't no more be depended

on than a rotten log across a crick. Looks all right kivered over with moss; but jest try to cross on it onst and the crick 'll come flyin' up in yore face. I wouldn't marry the whole twelve apossils theirselves. Jest look at Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, fer instance. I tell you what it is, Roxy, the heart of *man* is deceitful, and some men's hearts is desp'rate."

Twonnet helped also in the wedding preparations, and she was rather more comfortable than Jemima. For when once a wedding is determined on, one ever hopes for the best. The parson, when he blesses the most ill-starred match, hopes for impossible good luck to give happiness to a couple foreordained to misery. Twonnet showed her solicitude now and then by lapses of silence quite unusual. Between the silence of the one and the speech of the other of her helpmates, Roxy wished for Texas.

As Colonel Bonamy considered Mark's marriage with Roxy the surest means of defeating the missionary project, he wished to hasten the wedding, lest something should happen to interfere with his plan. In particular did he appreciate the necessity for haste after his meeting with Nancy. Nancy might appeal to Roxy, or Lathers might get hold of the story and use it to Mark's discredit and his father's annoyance. If he could once get Mark married, he would have placed him in a position of dependence. However, the colonel had a liking for a good wife as a thing that was sure to be profitable to a man. Roxy probably had no extravagant tastes, would be flattered by her marriage into such a family as the Bonamys, and her influence over Mark would, after a while, be just sufficient to keep him sober and steady at his work. Besides, he feared that, if Nancy had any real hold on Mark, she would find it greatly increased in case both the marriage

with Roxy and the mission to Texas were given up. So it happened, through the planning of the colonel, that the wedding was fixed for the second week following the raid of Nancy.

There was nothing out of the ordinary about Roxy's wedding There were present her aunt's family and Twonnet's; Miss Rachel Moore, who was to take her place as mistress of the house the next week, was there, of course, and Colonel Bonamy and his daughters, and as many besides as the old house would hold. Adams had asked Whittaker, but the minister had not come. Jemima stood in the background, the most impressive figure of all. The Methodist presiding elder, a venerable, white-haired man, familiarly called "Uncle Jimmy Jones," conducted the simple service.

I said there was nothing out of the ordinary. But Bobo was there. For days he had watched the cake-baking and the other preparations. He heard somebody say that Roxy was to be married, and he went about the house conning the saying like a lesson, as though he were trying to get some meaning out of it.

"Roxy is going to be married," he would say over and over, from morning till night. When he saw the company gathering, he went into an ecstasy of confused excitement. And when at last Roxy came into the room, in her simple bridal dress, he broke from his mother's side and seized Roxy's disengaged hand. Jemima and his mother made an effort to recapture him, but Roxy turned and said, "Let him come."

"Let him come," echoed Bobo, and walking by the side of the bride and her bridegroom till they halted in front of the minister, he looked up at the stately old man and said with childish glee, "Roxy's going to be married."

This outburst of Bobo's sent the color of Mrs. Hanks's face up to scarlet. What would the Bonamys think? Jemima put her handkerchief over her mouth to stifle a laugh, and Amanda Bonamy turned her head. Couldn't they keep the simpleton at home? The old minister was confused for a moment, but the smile on Roxy's face reassured him. The lad stood still listening to the ceremony and repeating it over in an inaudible whisper. When the minister concluded the benediction with the words: "Be with you evermore," Bobo caught at the last word and cried: "evermore, Roxy, evermore!"

"Yes, Bobo, dear," said the bride, turning to him and looking down into his wistful eyes. "Yes, evermore and evermore."

Perhaps because they were embarrassed by this unexpected episode, the company were silent, while Bobo for a moment turned over in his mind the word. Then by some association he connected it with the last words of the prayer Roxy had taught him. He went in front of her and looked at her with the awed look he had caught from her in repeating his prayer, he pointed up as she had pointed in teaching him, and said:

"Forever and ever, amen."

"Yes, Bobo, forever and ever, amen, and now you shall have the very first kiss."

"The very first kiss," chuckled the innocent, as he turned away after Roxy had kissed him.

Through all this interruption Adams stood by the long clock and held on to the lappel of his coat firmly and defiantly. He had a notion that the Bonamys thought that their family lent a luster to Roxy and he wanted to knock some of them over, but he kept firm hold of his coat and contented himself with looking like a wild beast at bay.

Mrs. Hanks whispered to her husband that she felt as if she could sink through the floor, and, indeed, she was quite flustered when she came to wish the newly married "much joy," and quite thrown out of the fine speech she had prepared for delivery to Mark. Amanda Bonamy kissed Roxy condescendingly as became a well-bred girl; but when it came to Janet's turn, she kissed Roxy first on one cheek and then on the other, called her a dear, dear sister and said:

"Wasn't that sweet that poor little Bobo said? It made your wedding so solemn and beautiful—just like your wedding ought to be."

And from that moment Roxy took the enthusiastic girl into her heart of hearts. She made her sit by her at the wedding dinner to make which had exhausted all the skill of Roxy and her helpers, and the whole purse of her father. For the custom of that time did not allow of coffee and sandwiches and cake passed around the room. As for light breakfasts and an immediate departure on a tour to nowhere in particular, that only came in with locomotives and palace cars. In the good old days it cost as much to get married as it does now to be buried; one must then feed one's friends on fried chickens and roast turkeys and all sorts of pies, and pound cake and "floating island," and "peach cobbler,"—an enormous dish of pastry inclosing whole peaches, pits and all—and preserves with cream, and grape jellies, and —— but this is not a bill of fare.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE INFARE.

There could be no wedding in a Hoosier village thirty or forty years ago without an infare on the following day. In those days the *faring* into the house of the bridegroom's parents was observed with great rejoicing. At an earlier stage of the village's history the little brass cannon was fired in honor of weddings and almost the whole town kept holiday. On the day after Roxy's wedding Colonel Bonamy made a great infare as became a great man like himself. It was preceded by a week of cooking and baking. On the day of the infare, "Uncle Billy," a skillful old negro, was imported from Kentucky to roast the pig which hung suspended by a wire in front of the wide kitchen fire-place, while Billy turned it round and round, basting it from time to time. For roast-pig at a wedding feast was the symbol of aristocracy,—a Bonamy might lose his soul, but he could not be married without a pig.

Everybody who could be considered at all invitable was there. The Boones and Haz Kirtley's family and the fishermen's families and the poor-whiteys generally were left out, but everybody who was anybody was there. Not only from town but from the country and even from the Kentucky shore guests were brought. Neither age nor sex was respected. Old Mother Tartrum was there engaged in her diligent search after knowledge. She was in

herself a whole Society for the Collection and Diffusion of Useless Information. She also collected various titbits of cake off the supper-table which she wrapped in her red silk handkerchief and deposited in her pocket. She was a sort of animated Dictionary of Universal Biography for the town, able to tell a hundred unimportant incidents in the life of any person in the place, and that without being consulted.

Whittaker had sunk into a helpless despondency as the time of Roxy's marriage approached, and he could not bring himself to be present at the wedding. But fearing unfriendly remark he had brought his courage to the point of attending the infare. He came late, however, and the house and ground were already filled with guests. He walked up between the long row of Lombardy poplars, looking at the brightly illuminated house of the Bonamys, which, lying on the outskirts of the town, combined in itself something of the spruceness of the town-house with the isolation of a farm-house. The house was a squarish brick one, the walks were of gravel. There was a lawn of greensward on either hand with a vineyard and fields of tasseled corn in the moonlit background. People were all about him as he approached the house, and many greeted him as he passed. But Whittaker was a man marching in his own funeral procession. Despite his utmost exertion to address Mark and Roxy with cheerfulness, there was that in his face which caused Mark to say to Roxy as he turned away:

"What a ser ous looking man he is!"

And his seriousness had something infectious about it, for Roxy did not recover a bridal cheerfulness fo. some time afterward.

Out of respect for Mark's and Roxy's scruples, and, too,

for Mark's semi-clerical position as a "local" or lay preacher on his way to a further promotion into the "traveling" ministry, there was no dancing. The company promenaded in the halls and up and down the gravel walks between the Lombardy poplars, and among the sprucely trimmed pyramidal cedars that stood about the house.

Something in Whittaker's gloomy mood made him averse to the throng of merry people, the more that, on account of the rumors which had circulated about his attachment to Roxy, he was closely watched. About ten o'clock Mother Tartrum met him and put him through his catechism with vigor. *Had* he ever been engaged to Roxy? He might tell an old woman like herself, in confidence! How was it broken off? Was it he that withdrew, or did Roxy refuse him? *Had* Mr. Highbury given him a piece of his mind? Wasn't he feeling rather bad to-night?

To all of these questions the minister flatly refused to reply, and at last brusquely walked away, turning into an unfrequented path bordered by privet hedge. This led him to the garden, into which he entered by a gate through a paling fence. He went down under the grape-arbor that stood, according to the unvarying fashion of the country, in the middle of the garden. Walking quietly and meditatively, he came to the other side of the garden, where he turned and saw full before him the brilliantly lighted house, and the company moving up and down the walks and through the rooms. He could plainly see the figure of Roxy, as she stood by her husband, cheerful now and diffusing light on all about her. Mark, for his part, was always cheerful; there was not a vein of austerity in his composition. He was too hopeful to fear

for the future, and too buoyantly happy and complacent to be disturbed by anything. Certainly he was a fine-looking man, standing there in the light of a multitude of candles, and entering with his limitless heartiness into the merriment of the throng about him, giving back banter for banter with the quick sallies of the racy humor of the country. But there was something about this popular young fellow, carrying all before him, which gave Whittaker a sense of foreboding. Does a rejected lover ever think that the woman has done quite so well for her own interest as she might?

Fast by Roxy stood Twonnet. There was a sort of separation of feeling between them now; but Roxy was soon to go away, and Twonnet determined to stand by her to the last. If she had looked upon the marriage as the town saw it,—as an ascent for Roxy,—she would have chosen to be elsewhere; but because Roxy had not done as well as she might, Twonnet stood by her with a chivalrous faithfulness. Whittaker, in his mood of unreason, took Twonnet's fidelity to Roxy in umbrage, as a sort of desertion of himself. It is so hard for us to understand why our friends do not feel our wrongs so poignantly as we do.

Whittaker could not help wondering what Adams was thinking of, as he stood defiantly against the wall, grasping the lappel of his coat, as though he would hold firmly to his propriety by this means.

The minister had stood thus more than a minute, when the company were summoned to supper. The table was spread on the porch which ran along the side of the L of the house, in full view from his stand-point. He could see the fine-looking bridegroom lead the procession to the table, and all the company following. He thought that

he ought to return to the house, lest his absence should be observed.

But just as he was about to make a languid movement in the direction of the supper, he heard a stealthy tread on the outside of the vine-covered garden fence. He listened until the person walking along the fence had passed a few feet further on. A cluster of lilac-bushes intervened between him and the position of the new-comer; but he could hear a suppressed voice, as of a woman in soliloquy:

"That's her, shore as shootin'. She aint purty, neither, nor never was. I'll pay her up! See ef I don't. She thinks she's got him now. An' all that finery and flummery. I ort to be there at that table. Folks would see somebody ef I was there. But she's ornery,—ornery as git out. I kin git him away from her ef I ever git half a chance. They'd better go to Texas purty shortly, ef she knows what's good fer her. I'll show her. Saltpeter wont save 'em ef they stay here." Then, after a long pause; "She'll wish she was dead afore I'm done. Let her larn to steal *my* beau. Ef she packs him off to Texas, I'll foller, sure. An' I'll pay her up, or my name haint Nancy Kirtley."

To Whittaker the whole speech was evidently the thinking aloud of an ignorant person full of suppressed passion. The tone frightened him, and he moved cautiously so as to get a view of the speaker. Her hair was pushed back from her low forehead in a disheveled fashion, and even in the moonlight he could see the fine eyes and the large, regular features, and could feel a certain impression of the great animal beauty of the woman standing there, not ten feet from him, with fists clenched hard, and a look of ferocity on her countenance that he had never seen on human face before. She re

minded him of nothing so much as of an old steel-plate print he had seen of Judith with the bloody head of Holofernes. Having no knowledge of Nancy, Whittaker did not understand the meaning of her words; but he could make out that some evil was intended to Roxy.

His first impulse was to call Colonel Bonamy. Then in his confused thought came a pity for the poor girl torn thus by her evil passions, and a sense of his duty to her; he would go and try to exorcise the demon.

Nancy had come to town resolved to prevent Mark's marriage at any cost. She would show the watch-seal and the Testament to Roxy, and thus awaken her jealousy if she could. She would even threaten Mark with exposure of some sort, or with slanderous charges. She would not be outwitted by the old man any more, she would go to jail, if she had to go to jail; but she would have her revenge. Great was her chagrin at finding the wedding already past and the infare set down for that very evening. There was nothing left for her but to fume and threaten retribution. Her rage had brought her here, —envy and malice are devils that drive possessed souls into the contemplation of that which aggravates their madness.

Nancy stood thus in this torturing perdition of Tantalus,—maddened by seeing the pomp into which another poor girl had come instead of herself,—maddened by the very sight of happy faces and the sound of merry voices, while she was in the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. She stood there with her fist shut up and her face distorted by wrath—as a lost soul might curse the far-away heaven—when she heard from the bushes behind her the voice of Whittaker.

"What is the matter with you, my friend?" He had

almost said Judith, so much was his imagination impressed by the resemblance of the swarthy beauty to the picture of that magnificent Hebrew assassin.

When he spoke Nancy gave a sudden start, not of timidity, but of wrath—as a wild beast might start at an interruption when about to spring upon the prey.

"What do you want with me?" she muttered in sullen fierceness.

Whittaker drew a little nearer with a shudder.

"Only to help you if I can. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, I reckon, unless you kill that woman."

"What woman?"

"That Adams girl that's gone and married Mark Bonamy."

"What should I kill her for?"

"Bekase I hate the sights of her.

"What harm has she done?"

"She stole my beau. Do you know that I had ort by rights to stand there at that there table by Mark Bonamy, and that mean, hateful huzzy's scrouged into my place—confound her! Now then, anybody that meddles with Nance Kirtley is sorry fer it afore they're done. Ef Mark and the old man and that ugly, good-fer-nothing', prayin', shoutin' Roxy Adams don't wesh they'd never hearn tell of me, then I'm a fool. You jest let anybody cross *my* path onst ef they want to be sorry fer it."

"Don't you know that you oughtn't to talk that way? Roxy didn't do you any harm. You hadn't any right to Mark because you loved him."

"Stranger, looky there—that's his Testament. He gin me that weth his own hands. There! that's his watch seal. Pulled it off and gin it to me. Now, what made him leave me and go to that homely, lantern-jawed, slab

sided thing of a shoe-maker's gal? Hey? She done it. That's what she was up to weth her prayin' and talkin' and singin'. I'll pay her up yet. See ef I don't."

At sight of these ocular proofs of Mark's attachment to Nancy, Whittaker was silent a moment.

"Does Roxy know anything about these things?" he said after a while.

"In course not."

"What do you hate *her* for?"

"What fer? Thunder and blazes! Jes look at the blamed, stuck-up, good-fer-nothin' thing there! She's got my place—why shouldn't I hate her? Ah-h-h you—ugh-h-h, you ugly old thing you—I'll make you cry nuff afore I'm done weth you." And Nancy shook her fist in the direction of Roxy.

"You oughtn't to talk in that way. Don't you know there's a God?"

"God or no God, I'm agoin' to git even weth Mark Bonamy and that hateful wife of his'n. Why didn't he ax me to his infare? Hey? Comes to my house and dances with me the livelong night. Gives me presents and talks as sweet as sugar-water.* Then he marries old Tom Adams's girl and don't ax me to the party, nur nothin'. I'll pay him back one of these yer days."

Seeing that further remonstrance was of no use Whittaker went down the walk to the house. Colonel Bonamy met him.

"Why, where have you been? We looked for you to say grace," said the old man.

"Colonel Bonamy, there's an infuriated young woman standing behind the bushes down at the other end of the

* The sap of the sugar-maple.

garden. She is mad about something, and I'm afraid she means some violence to Roxy."

"Oh yes, I guess I can tell who she is. She's a maniac after Mark. I'll go and see her."

And while Whittaker went in to supper with melancholy suspicions of Mark, the colonel walked swiftly round the outside of the garden and came up behind Nancy.

"Well, what's all this about?"

"You old brute, you," said Nancy; "why didn't you give me an invite? I'll pay you all back yet, see if I don't!"

"Don't talk so loud. The sheriff might hear you. He's in the house."

"Call him out here if you want to, you blasted fool," said the girl, now fully roused, and not fearing any danger that looked her fair in the face.

The colonel saw that he must take another tack.

"Oh no! I won't call him. Only be quiet, and come in and get some supper. I want to ask you some more questions about the things we talked about the other day."

"No, you don't. You don't ax me nothin'. You want to wind me up and tangle me up, tell I don't know my own name. No more of yer axin' fer me."

"You've got a seal of my son's?"

"Yes, I have."

"Did anybody see him give you that seal?"

"No, they didn't."

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"Did he give it to you?"

"In course he did. How else did I get it?"

"You could steal it, couldn't you?"

"You—you—you durn't say I'm a thief!"

"Did you say that you stole it?"

"No, I didn't! You know I didn't, blast you!"

"You said nobody saw him give it to you, and I didn't say you stole it. But you just as good as say you did by getting so mad."

"You lie!"

"He was on his horse when you got it from him, wasn't he?"

"None of your axin, I tell you."

"There 'tis again. You know you stole it, or you wouldn't be afraid to answer."

"You lie! He give it to me when he was a-settin' on his horse, in front of our house."

"And your father didn't see him?"

"No, he didn't."

"Nor your mother?"

"No."

"Nor nobody?"

"No."

"You got it from him when he was on his horse?"

"Yes."

"How did it come off his chain?"

"He unhooked it."

"You unhooked it, you said the other day. Now tell me the truth."

"Well, he let me." The girl began to quail under this steady fire of questions.

"You say you *got* it from him. What's that but stealing?"

"He give it to me."

"You unhooked it."

"Go 'way with your axin."

And the girl started to move off.

"Hold on. I'm not done yet."

"Yes, you air, too. I wont have no more of your fool axin. I'm agoin'."

"Stop! I say. You're on my ground, and I'll call the sheriff, if you don't stop."

"Call him ef you want to, an' go to thunder with you both?" And with this she went sullenly off, the colonel affecting to detain her. Nancy was afraid of nothing in the world so much as of his fire of questions, and the irritation and mortification sure to ensue from the confusion into which he would lead her.

The terror which the questions inspired, added to the reaction from her burst of passion, served to give her a general sense of fear, that drove her away into the darkness, though she muttered defiance as she slowly retreated into the corn-field.

"They'll be sorry they ever crossed my path," were the last ominous words the colonel heard from her, as he lost sight of her among the tall rows of tasseled maize.

CHAPTER XXX.

LOVE AND GRAMMAR.

On the day following Roxy's infare, Mr. Adams took Mr. Whittaker down to Miss Rachel Moore's rooms, and, in defiance of all the customs of the time, was married privately, with no witnesses but Mark and Roxy. Miss Moore would have liked a little more of ceremony, a few friends, and some little show. But when Mr. Adams told her that people of their age would better be married without any nonsense, she answered, "Very likely, very likely, my dear Mr. Adams! che-he-he."

On the night of the infare at Bonamy's, some of the young fellows who were not invited, showed their wit by perpetrating a transposition—that joke that is as old as sign-boards themselves. No doubt in Babylon sign-boards were changed round at night so as to make good Assyriac puns and other such jokes.

And what mischievous boys probably did in Babylon in B. C. 1841, that they certainly did in Luzerne in A. D. 1841. For Mr. Adams, on the morning on which he was to be married, found over his shoe-shop door a sign which read, "Miss Moore, Millinery and Mantua-maker," and Rachel Moore came near snickering her head off with mingled shame and pleasure to find "T Adams, Boot and Shoe-maker," at her place of business. It was characteristic of Adams that he let the signs remain as they were that day. Only he had the wedding earlier in the day

telling Rachel that when they were married the joke would be spoiled. To which she replied that she thought it very likely indeed. At any rate she willingly conspired to spoil the joke.

But the old man was resolved that the joke should go no further. Hearing that he was to be shivereed that night, according to the usage by which widowers, and old maids, and all whose weddings are eccentric, are serenaded with skillet lids, and "dumb-bulls," and "horse-fiddles," and bells, and tin pans, he put a stop to it in his own fashion. He borrowed a double-barrel shot-gun, and carried it ostentatiously down the main street. When Tom Pilman, the rough who led all such serenading parties, saw him pass, and hailed him with: "Hello, Adams! What you going to do with that gun?" he made answer, "We're going to have a serenade at our house to-night, and a coroner's inquest in the morning." The empty gun stood peacefully in a corner that night, and there was no shiveree.

Mrs. Rachel wanted to continue her business, and Adams gave consent. There was a dignity and authority about her position as modiste, which she did not like to surrender. She thought she would rather keep "help" to do the work at home, and go on as usual, dealing in ribbons, and bonnets, and general intelligence. Only her husband stipulated that her sign must be changed.

"'Millinery and Mantua-maker,'" he said, sneeringly. "Why, you aren't for sale, Rachel, are you?"

"Very likely, Mr. Adams," she said, in a blissful and absent-minded titter.

"Why, Rachel, you must have lost your wits!"

"Very likely. Che-he-he!"

"But the sign must be changed so as to read 'Milliner

and Mantua-maker.' Don't you think it ought to be changed?"

"Very likely. The 'Miss' ought to be changed to 'Mrs.' now. Che-he-he!"

Poor Miss Moore had dreamed *so* long of that change.

"That would make you Mrs. Moore," said Adams. "Aren't you going to take my name?"

"Oh yes! I forgot. I'm Mrs. Adams. It seems so strange to change a lady's name—che-he—for the first time, you know. Now you're used to it, you know. Oh! I forgot—che-he-he—men don't—che-he-he—change their names, do they?"

Adams gave up making her understand his scruples of grammar, at least until she should recover from the idiocy of her honeymoon. He had the sign changed, however, and Mrs. Rachel Adams read it every time she approached the little shop, in a glad endeavor to impress it on her own mind that her reproach among women was taken away, and that she was an old maid no longer, but on a par with any other "Mrs." in town.

In the matter of finding a help, Mr. Adams consulted Jemima, whom he met in the street. Did she know anybody that he could get?

"Yes, I 'low I do," she answered.

"A real good-tempered person and trustworthy?" asked Adams.

"Awful trustworthy, and crusty enough to keep you company any day, Mr. Adams."

"Well, who is it?" said the shoe-maker. "If she'll only quarrel with me, I don't care. I'd like a little quarreling, and you can no more quarrel with Rachel than you can with sunshine itself. Who is it that you mean?"

"The fust letters of her name's Jemima Dumbleton, aud she's got a powerful dislike to the male sect in particular, and to most men in general."

"Would you leave Henrietta?"

"I ruther leave'r'n not. I dislike the male sect, but Henrietta I dislike on her own particular account. She's too good for me."

Adams was pleased to get Jemima, and immensely gratified at having a chance to defy Mrs. Hanks at the same time. Poor subdued Mrs. Rachel was shocked. To brave Mrs. Hanks was too much. But Adams told her that now she was his wife, she must hold up her head and show her independence, or Henrietta would run right over her. "You're a married woman now, Rachel," he concluded.

At which Rachel smiled audibly, and answered, "Very likely, my dear."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ATTEMPT TO FORECLOSE.

THE little teapot of Luzerne society had been agitated during the two weeks of preparation for the marriage by surmises in regard to the ulterior purpose of Colonel Bonamy in consenting to Mark's wedding Roxy, and even offering him help conditioned on his marriage. To pious people it seemed a special interference of Providence in favor of Texas. But not so to the sage and sagacious Lathers. He knew nothing about Providence—he felt distinctly his moral inability to understand God's way of doing things, though if he thought about God at all it was doubtless as one who was a good deal shrewder in carrying his selfish ends than men were in achieving theirs. To him God and the devil were playing a series of games, and though the former might now and then let the latter gain a few points, it was only for the sake of making the play interesting, and of finally beating the devil into utter bankruptcy and locking him up in perdition for a thousand years. But if Lathers could not see through the ways of Providence so well as some of his townsmen, he thought he did know something about Colonel Bonamy.

"I say, watch out fer the devil when he is playin' possum," said Lathers. "But what the dickens Colonel Bonamy's doin' now, I can't see. Him help the missionary work? Not him. That aint his side of the question. Wait till you see this game out. Wait till he begins to

play the aces he's got up his sleeve. Now, liker'n not the old man's goin' to git married to some young wife, er run fer Congress, and he wants Mark away off among the Egyptians in the land of Babylon, an' the like. I'm purty good at guessin', now,—I've knowed Colonel Bonamy nigh onto twenty-four year, an' he's powerful deep. Now you just watch out fer him, will you, and see ef he don't do somethin' like I say."

But Lathers was far out of the way. Colonel Bonamy began to urge first on Mark and then on Roxy that they should postpone their journey.

"Better put it off till New Year's. It isn't safe going to that climate so early," he said.

But the enthusiastic Roxy was hard to manage. Mark was impatient to be away, as any active-minded young man is impatient to set out upon the achievement of his purposes. He would have yielded readily enough, however, notwithstanding his impatience; for, since his father's management of Nancy, he felt a certain confidence in the friendliness of his purposes. But the dire danger of souls without a shepherd oppressed the spirit of Roxy. It was pleasant to her to enjoy, here in her own town, the devotion of Mark, the fine-looking young husband of her heart; but, because it was pleasant, the austere girl was eager to surrender it. Perhaps, too, there was in her mind some latent dread lest an easy temper like Mark's might not hold firmly fixed a severe resolution not immediately put into execution. So she resisted energetically, and with success, the influence of Colonel Bonamy's persuasions on the mind of Mark. If he did not go at the time appointed, Roxy urged, the bishop would not want him at all. Indeed, this uncertainty and complexity of motive drove the straightforward Roxy into an irritable energy

of temper which was a surprise to herself. She longed to be where she could act again directly toward a definite aim.

All the time that this discussion was being waged, and Colonel Bonamy was seeking some means of detaining Mark without a point-blank refusal to keep his agreement in the matter of furnishing money, Mark was supposed to be engaged in studies preparatory to his ministrations among the Texans. Wesley's "Sermons," and Watson's "Institutes of Theology" were especially prescribed; but to a man of Mark's animal spirits and glowing feelings, the clear-cut and severely unrhetorical sentences of Wesley seemed uninteresting, while the long-linked reasoning of Watson, by which it was clearly demonstrated that foreknowledge was not fore-ordination, even where God himself was the foreknower, was decidedly dry. He liked better a copy of Maffit's "Sermons," then fresh from the press, and full of far-resounding bombast about the stage-fixings of the day of judgment. But he managed to get on in the arduous task of reading Wesley and Watson, by dint of reclining laboriously on the bed, while Roxy sat by the window and read to him, putting something of the fire of her own enthusiasm into Wesley's grave and simple diction and changing Watson's abstruse speculations almost into poetry by the illumination of her imagination.

On Sundays, Mark exercised himself in preaching in the country school-houses. The young missionary was quite the lion, and the crowds of listening people that came to hear him, and, above all, the eyes of his young wife, stimulated him to addresses of much warmth. They seemed to Mark far better than Wesley's.

Meantime Colonel Bonamy drew the reins tighter on

his son. Now that Mark was married, he could not go to Texas on the pittance the church would pay, and the father had some difficulty in remembering that he had made any definite promise in the matter. At most, he could not raise the money before midwinter, and as he did not believe in their going to the South until January, he was not going to hurry himself. People who were going to be dependent should not be too domineering about it.

Slowly, as the old colonel began to hint that preaching in Indiana would do just as well, Mark perceived his duplicity; and, by degrees, he came to understand that his father had not intended to have him go to Texas at all. No man of Mark's spirit likes to be managed, and when once the scheme by which he had been encouraged to marry for the sake of keeping him at home dawned upon him, all his pride and combativeness were carried over to Roxy's side of the question.

"I am going to start to Texas by the 'Duke of Orleans,'" he said one day, with great positiveness. "She will leave Cincinnati about the middle of October."

"Well," said the old man in a whining drawl, under which he always covered any expression of defiance—"Well, if you go in the middle of October, instead of waiting until the time I have set, you must not expect me to keep you from starving. You'll have too look out for yourselves."

"That's just what we've made up our minds to," rejoined the son. "If we can't live on what missionary money we are to have, we will scratch for a living, like other poor emigrants."

"You can't pay your traveling expenses out there," said the old man.

"By selling my horse, and some other things, I can get there."

"And ride afoot when you get there, eh?"

"Well, I'm going. That's the long and short of it."

"Well, you can go to the devil, for all of me," said the old man, turning sharply away.

Mark was resolved not to be the dupe of his father, and Roxy, for her part, was rather pleased with the prospect of extreme poverty in the mission work. It filled her ideal. Indeed Colonel Bonamy was in every way disappointed in Roxy. She did not seem at all afraid of him, nor in the least conscious that she had married above her station, and she showed a resistance to his domineering will that was beyond anything he had imagined possible. His interviews in private with his daughter-in-law were a succession of defeats. She even showed, on occasion, a temper that seemed to him quite inconsistent with her general saintliness.

But Colonel Bonamy had not yet "played out his game," as he phrased it.

"Mark," he began, as they two sat together in the office one day, "you never asked me how I came out with your Rocky Fork girl."

"She's none of mine," said Mark.

"She shows rather strong proofs of your liking for her. You don't give your watch-seals and Testaments to every young convert, do you? Now, if Nancy were to bring a suit for breach of promise of marriage, these things might play the deuce with you. And she would have done it if it hadn't been for me. I kept the facts out of Lathers's hands, and I had hard work to keep her from coming in and making a row at the infare. If you and Mrs. Roxy are too stubborn, I don't know but that I'd better just let

things take their course. I think you'd hardly set out on a mission to Texas with such charges against you." The old man emphasized this with a sinister laugh, very provoking to the other.

"You'd look well, setting such charges a-going against your own son," retorted Mark, reflecting that his father's family pride was protection enough from the execution of that threat.

But he was not at ease. Secretly he feared Nancy. Since his wedding, he had twice seen her at a distance in Luzerne, and had turned out of his way to keep from meeting her. This fear of Nancy was alone enough to determine him to get away to Texas by the next New Orleans boat. But at the same time, he dreaded an open break with his father: He knew the old man's love of mastery, and he did not know how far it might carry him. He no longer insisted that he was going, whether or no. The senior was lulled into security by his silence, believing that the enemy wavered, and that he should yet carry the day. And as days went by, with no visible preparations for his son's departure, the colonel thought that he was gaining time; and, since the others did not speak of it, he treated the matter as though it were tacitly settled as he wished.

But Mark had secretly sold his horse, had sent word by a friend to the captain of the steamboat "Duke of Orleans," then lying at Cincinnati, asking him to stop at Luzerne to take him and his wife aboard. Roxy's preparations were all made, but she did not like the secrecy which Mark enjoined. She could not bear to do right as though she were doing wrong.

As the time approached for him to depart, Mark felt that the storm would be all the more severe when it did

burst upon him, and that he could not much longer keep the matter a secret, for all the brethren in the church wanted to know about it, and they would wish to hold a farewell meeting on the coming Sunday. But he was relieved of all debate on the way in which he should communicate the matter to his father, by the accident that Lathers heard of the sale of his horse, and forthwith sauntered into Colonel Bonamy's office.

"Is Mark reelly goin', Colonel?" he began.

"Do you think he is, yourself?" retorted the old man, with a sudden suspicion that Lathers knew more than he did.

"I don' know what to think," said the sheriff. "Sometimes it seems like as ef he wuz, and then ag'in more like as ef he wuzn't."

"I'd a little rather he'd stay, Major, but I suppose he'll go," said Bonamy, affecting indifference.

"Did you know he'd sold his hoss and saddle?"

This was a thunder-clap to the colonel, but he did not let Lathers see the inward start it gave him.

"I believe he has sold several things. He didn't consult me, and I haven't asked who bought it."

"Done kind o' on the sly, wuzn't it?"

"He's a fool if he does things on the sly from me. He'll have to depend on me when he gets out there."

"Well, I heerd Ben Plunkett sayin' that he'd bought, but wuzn't to say anything about it tell the time come. An' I thought a father ought to know what's going on in his own family."

"Oh, well, I know pretty well, Major, how the land lies. If they will be fools, let 'em. It's no lookout of mine."

Lathers left the office, but he was gratified to observe

from the next street-corner, on which he had taken up a stand of observation, that the colonel went home soon afterward.

"Mark 'll ketch it now," he chuckled, all his innate love of mischief being tickled by the consciousness of having exploded a mine at a safe distance from himself.

Colonel Bonamy was bitterly disappointed at having all his ambitious hopes of Mark overturned, and doubly chagrined that the whole village had now guessed out his motive in consenting to Mark's wedding Tom Adams's daughter. In conceding so much, and in employing all his art to defeat Nancy Kirtley, he had only rendered his own humiliation the more complete.

He found Mark and Roxy in their own room, in the midst of preparations for going, and poured upon them, for half an hour, the fiercest and most sarcastic things he could say, all uttered in his irritating, whining drawl. Mark was a coward, the colonel snarled. He had meant, if they *must* go, to keep his promise. But a man guilty of sneaking disobedience and ingratitude toward his father, wasn't fit to be a missionary. He would corrupt the people of Texas. It was in vain that Roxy tried to take the blame upon herself; the colonel's aristocratic gallantry did not forsake him for a moment. He gently waved her aside, and continued to berate Mark; for indeed he knew well that a wife would rather be scolded than have her husband denounced. Mark did not receive this lecture in the meekest way. Even Roxy could not restrain him, and he replied with a vehemence that brought both the sisters into the room.

Seeing that he prevailed nothing, and having wrought himself into a passion that put diplomacy out-of-doors, Colonel Bonamy, who gave himself credit for his dignified

"PLEASE, ROXY, DON'T LET HIM GO."

forbearance in not speaking a rude word to his daughter-in-law, did not mind saying words—sometimes with keener edge for her than a personal insult would have had.

"It was of much use that I interfered to keep that Kirtley girl from giving you trouble," he said to Mark "She would have stopped your wedding if I had let her. Didn't she stand out behind the garden and storm at you and Roxy by the hour on the night of the infare, and didn't it take both Whittaker and myself to quiet her?"

Mark turned pale at this, but extreme anger generally puts on an appearance of calmness.

"You know there is no truth in what she says, and yet you throw out innuendoes here in the presence of my wife and my sisters. We will leave your house right off, sir, and never sleep here again."

But here Janet caught hold of Mark, and then of her father, and then of Roxy, and begged them not to part in that way. She carried her tears and sobs round, and they were effectual. For, if a man will not listen to a crying woman's entreaty out of pity, he may yet yield because he hates a scene. See, for example, the story of the unjust judge.

"Mark's going away forever," pleaded the tender-hearted Janet. "Now, don't send him off this way. Don't go to-night, Mark. Please, Roxy, don't you let him go." And then she stopped and sobbed on Roxy's neck, and Roxy began to feel that her burden was more than she could bear. She had strengthened herself against poverty and barbarism; but what are poverty and barbarism to scolding men and crying women?

"I didn't send him," said the old man. "It's only his way of treating his father." Then, softening a little, he

said: "Come, Mark, don't let's quarrel any more. Of course I know the Kirtley story is all a lie. I oughtn't to have mentioned it, but you are so stubborn. Don't leave the house; it'll make trouble."

Without waiting for a reply, Colonel Bonamy went out, reflecting, with considerable satisfaction, that, go where she would, Roxy would be nettled by thoughts of Nancy Kirtley, and that the knowledge that Whittaker had heard Nancy's story, would multiply the trouble. The more he meditated on it, the more did he think his allusion to the Kirtley matter a master-stroke. "She'll be sorry she ever crossed me," he said.

Still, he could not but see that he had lost ground by his passion. He had set all his son's pride and anger in favor of going, and he had given the stubborn Roxy new motives for seeking a mission in Texas without delay

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OVERTHROW OF BOTH.

THE oldest son of the Bonamy family, the namesake of the father, had "turned out bad," as the village phrase ran. He was vicious from the beginning. Much money and many beech switches were wasted in vain attempts to beat the Latin paradigms into him against his inclination. He was sent away to boarding-school after a while, but the education he got there only made matters worse. When at last Colonel Bonamy stopped giving him money in order to throw him on his own resources, he preferred to live on other people's resources, and so became a gambler, in New Orleans, the Sodom of that day; after shooting a fellow-blackleg in an affray he sailed thence to Brazil and was never afterward heard from. The second son, a lad of promise, died in childhood. It would be hardly fair to say that all the old man's affection had centered itself in Mark. All his family pride and fierce ambition were concentrated in the boy. He rejoiced to discover in him as he grew up a fine force and fire in declamation, which was lacking in himself. He was sure that with his own knowledge of law and his shrewd "management" he could, by the help of Mark's eloquent delivery, maintain his ascendency at the bar to the last, and bequeath to his son the property and the distinction of the family. This was his whole dream of immortality. He had looked on Mark's Whiggery as rather a good thing—both parties would be

represented in the firm. He was rather glad of his sudden religious turn for the reason assigned in Watts's hymn, that it would save him "from a thousand snares, to mind religion young." When he got old he could take care of himself. At present Colonel Bonamy thought it a good thing in that it would check a tendency to dissipation that had given him uneasiness. He had thought favorably of Roxy in turn as an antidote to the Texan fever, and as one likely to make an economical wife, and restrain all wrong tendencies in her husband. For Colonel Bonamy hated all sin that interfered with success and no other. But now this Texas fool's-errand was a rock likely to wreck all his hopes and send him into old age disappointed and defeated.

Is it any wonder that during the last week before the coming of the "Duke of Orleans," every sort of persuasion, scolding, contention, persistent worrying and continual badgering were put in force against the young people, to weary them out of their purpose? Offers of property, persuasions by Mrs. Hanks, coaxings by Janet, remonstrances by Mr. Adams, were brought to the front through the scheming of the colonel. But in vain. Roxy would not disobey the heavenly voice for any entreaty; and Mark also good-naturedly credited himself with much martyr-like endurance. He had gone too far to yield now. Though, indeed, lying lazily there in the quiet coolness of the old brick house, listening to the rustle of the poplar leaves, hearing the old long clock ticking slowly its sixty beats a minute, soothed by the "chook, chook!" of the red-bird under the window, and the distant music of the blue-bird on the fence-stakes, flattered by the loving devotion of the most superb woman he had ever known, there were times when he wished that he and Roxy might give over

the hardness of Texas and remain in the comfort and dignity that surrounded them. He might even have proposed the matter tentatively to Roxy had it not been for a fear of annoyance from Nancy Kirtley. He was young and active and at times zealous. Toil and hardship he could endure, but annoyance, entanglement and perplexity were grievous to him.

As for Roxy, she was in ever deepening trouble. Her father's scoldings and persuasions disturbed, her aunt's preachment angered her. She could not look at Bobo, whose education must now be arrested entirely, without the bitterest regret. The poor fellow seemed to have caught some vague notion of the impending trouble, from words he had heard.

"What will Bobo do when Roxy's gone?" she heard him repeat dejectedly, but whether he fully understood a saying that he echoed in this way she could not tell. Sometimes a sharp pang of doubt crossed her mind whether it were her duty to leave the little garden of Bobo's mind to cultivate an unpromising patch in the great wilderness of heathendom. But then the thought of soul-saving perplexed her logic as it has that of many another. Bobo would go to heaven anyhow, but how about the people in Texas? Then, too, there was Mark's ability, of which she more and more felt herself the keeper. She must not thwart his great destiny. But in all these perplexities she had to stand alone. She could not support herself on Mark; his heroic resolutions leaned more and more for support upon her. She could not go to Twonnet. There was no one to ask.

Colonel Bonamy was restrained by his conventional gallantry from scolding Roxy, but no gallantry kept him from scolding at her. And no gallantry checked the

innuendoes of Amanda, who held Roxy a sort of intruder in the family. But Amanda heartily hoped that Mark would take himself off to Texas if he wanted to go. She did not care to have either him or his wife at home to interfere with her mastery of things. And, indeed, the haughtiness of Amanda did not disturb Roxy so much as the tearful entreaties of Janet, whom she loved now with her whole girl's heart. Janet came into the place that Twonnet had occupied. She had so taken her color from Roxy that she had even braved her sister's scorn in making an attempt to take up the teaching of Bobo. But no patience or tact less than Roxy's could effect that.

Along with Roxy's other troubles she found herself a prey to what seemed to her a mean feeling, and this was a new and bitter experience for one struggling to lead the highest and most ideal life. She was unable any more to think of that dark Kirtley girl with composure. It pained her to recall how lustrous were her black eyes, how magnificent her *tout ensemble.* What truth was there behind Colonel Bonamy's hints? Had Nancy Kirtley any claim on Mark? Her growing knowledge of the vain and self-indulgent element in her husband's disposition did not reassure her. The only feeling in her heart that rivaled her religious devotion was her passionate love for Mark, and in proportion to her love was her desire to be sure of her entire possession. Lurking in a dark corner of her mind into which she herself was afraid and ashamed to look, was a suspicion that served as a spur to her pious resolution to carry the Texas mission into execution at once.

The farewell meeting was duly appointed to be held on the last Sunday that Mark was to be in Luzerne, but on Saturday morning Haz Kirtley's dray rattled up in

front of Colonel Bonamy's door. The drayman called Mark out and told him that "the w'arf-master had just heerd from the 'Duke.' She laid all last night at Warsaw takin' on a hundred bar'ls of whisky, and would be down this evenin' about four o'clock"

So the farewell meeting must be given up. Haz was to call for the boxes and trunks at two o'clock that afternoon.

As for Nancy, she was not capable of forming any plan for detaining Mark except that of trying to regain her influence over him, and this seemed impossible since he steadily avoided meeting her, and she was dreadfully afraid on her part of a collision with the Colonel. But when at last she heard that Mark was about going she determined at least to gratify the resentment of wounded vanity. She put the Testament and the watch-seal in her pocket and took her stand on the wharf-boat at noon. When all the curiosity-seekers and all the church members should stand around to tell Brother Bonamy good-bye, she would make her speech, exhibit her trophies and thus "send that hateful Adams girl away with the biggest kind of a bumble-bee in her bonnet." And so for hours she paced up and down the wharf waiting for the arrival of the "Duke of Orleans."

The persistent Colonel Bonamy had not shown his usual self-control in his present defeat. Perhaps this was because it was the most notable and exasperating overthrow he had known; perhaps some oncoming nervous weakness—some gradual giving way of brain texture—in a man of sixty, whose life had been one of continual strain and excitement, had something to do with it. At any rate he now lost all self-restraint; and, what was the more remarkable, even something of his sense of conventional propriety. He stormed, and at last raved, at both Mark and Roxy.

"Never expect me to help you. Never expect me to write to you. Never come back here again. I will not have anything to do with you. You are no son of mine. I renounce you, now and forever!"

"Oh, please, sir," said Roxy, "please don't feel that way. We are only trying to do our duty. Mark loves you, and I love you. Please forgive us for giving you so——"

"Begone!" She had taken hold of his arm in her earnestness, and he now shook off her hand as though it were a snake. For either because there was a possibility of feeling on his part, or because there was not, Colonel Bonamy could not endure to have any appeal made to his emotions. "Begone! I don't want to see or hear of you again. Get out of the house at once!"

It was already time to go. Mr. Adams stood gloomily on the wharf-boat, waiting to see his Iphigenia sacrificed. He would not go to Bonamy's, because he thought the family had a sense of condescension toward him. Mrs. Hanks had taken Bobo to the river to see Roxy leave. Jemima was there. So was Twonnet, with her little brothers and sisters; Adolphe was throwing sticks into the water, in order to hear Bobo chuckle at seeing these tiny rafts float away on the broad current. There was an ever increasing crowd on the wharf to see Mark leave. Mr. Dale, the Methodist preacher, and the chief brethren were there; and Lathers stood alongside the melancholy and abstracted Mr. Whittaker, explaining to that gentleman the good Presbyterian influences under which he had been reared, and how his mother had raised him in the nursery and admonition of the Lord, like Mary Ann, the mother of Moses, and the like, you know. And ever as the crowd increased the Rocky Fork beauty, with that precious bumble-bee in her head which she meant to put in Roxy's bonnet when the

time came, slunk away down one of the aisles between a row of bales of hay, where, half hidden in the obscurity, she could keep a good watch for the arrival of Mark and his wife. And several people in the crowd busied themselves with suggesting that Colonel Bonamy would not come to the w'arf. Grandma Tartrum had been seized that very day with an attack of "the rheumatics," and had to deny herself the fun of seeing the departure. But she had sent a faithful reporter in the person of her little grandson, Zeb, whose natural gift for eavesdropping and nosing had been much sharpened by judicious training.

The last struggle almost overcame even Roxy's constancy. What right had a son to tear himself away from an old father? It was a hard law that a man must hate father and mother for the Lord's sake. It was to her like performing an amputation. All her strength was gone, and there was yet the awful parting from her own father, and the farewell forever to Bobo and to Twonnet, in store for her. She hesitated. Mark was not so much affected; he was accustomed to suspect an ulterior aim in all that his father did, and he doubted the reality of his anger. It was but for a moment that the heart of Roxy faltered; then the duty of leaving all for the kingdom of heaven's sake, the Macedonian cry of lost souls in the wilderness, the loyalty to her Christ-service, all came back to fortify her resolution. Meantime Colonel Bonamy, having given rein to his passion, could not or would not restrain himself, but raved like a man demented.

"Tell me good-bye, won't you?" pleaded Roxy, going up to him at the very last moment, with the assurance of one who was born to exert an influence on people.

"I will not! Out with you!" cried Colonel Bonamy in a hoarse staccato.

Bidding Amanda and Janet farewell, Roxy turned to Mark, who had become calmer as his father grew more stormy. Mark's intellect always grew clearer and his will more direct in a time of trial. With perfect quietness he took leave of his sisters and started out the door, never so much as looking at his father. The carriage had been ordered back to the stable by the wrathful colonel, and there was nothing now for the young people but to walk to the landing.

"Good-bye, father Bonamy," said Roxy, turning her head regretfully toward him as she reached the door.

The old man turned. Whether he meant to speak kindly or fiercely Roxy could not tell. He only said "Roxy!" and came toward her. Mark, knowing his father's pertinacity, trembled inwardly, with a fear of some new form of attack. Would the old man say more about that Kirtley matter? But as he held out his hand to Roxy, he reeled. Mark ran toward him too late. He fell at full length upon the floor, unconscious. Mark lifted him to the bed, and Roxy stood over him, with a remorseful feeling that she had somehow struck him down herself.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE "DUKE OF ORLEANS."

At a little before four o'clock the "Duke of Orleans" came around the head of the island. She was one of the typical "lower country" boats of that day. The mail boats were built light of draught, and, for that time, swift of speed; the stern-wheelers and the insignificant, old-fashioned "chicken-thieves" were still lighter. But the lower country boat was heavy in build, deep in draught, slow in the revolution of her wheels; with a sturdy, bull-dog look when seen in front, and an elephantine solemnity of motion when viewed at broadside, the wheels seeming to pause at each semi-revolution. The lower country boat of that day defied all time-tables. She started when ever she was ready, and she stopped as often and as long as she found occasion. The arrival of a New Orleans boat at the wharf of one of the river towns at this time of the year was a great event. It was only in an exceptional season that there was water enough in the channel for such craft above the falls of the Ohio in October.

Now that the boat had actually come around the island, the fact that Mark and Roxy were not anywhere yet to be seen was a great disappointment to people on the wharf. They were, perhaps, to be cheated out of their spectacle; they would not see Roxy's tears, nor any of the other entertaining things they had a right to expect. Mr. Adams

moved testily to and fro, fearing he knew not what. Twonnet strained her eyes up Ferry street in vain; Granny Tartrum's boy, Zeb, was exceedingly active in the effort to find out what it all stood for; and the wharf-master's little brown dog dashed about in a way that showed how keenly he also felt that a crisis had come, and that something ought to be done. The "Duke" approached with majestic tardiness, her captain ringing the great bell on the hurricane deck in a slow and imperious fashion. He rang five great taps, which were echoed faintly in the distant hills. If he had stopped at three, it would have signified that he intended only to send out the yawl for his passengers; but the five solemn tolls were the sign of a landing. Then the boat "rounded to,"—brought her bow round so as to point her head upward against the stream. The line was thrown out to the wharf-boat and caught by the wharf-master, who, with Haz Kirtley's help, quickly took a turn with it round the check-post. This important operation was vigilantly superintended by the little brown dog, who, with tail in the air, ran around the check-post till the line was made fast, and then dashed away to attend to the running out of the "walk-plank."

Here was the boat and here the baggage; but the passengers were not. But now came galloping down the street an old negro, appendage from time immemorial of the Bonamy family, who rode his plow-horse to a most unwonted speed as he sat with legs projecting forward and outward, holding to the reins of his bridle with one hand, while he gripped the mane with the other to keep himself from being thrown by the awkward plunges of the stiff old animal. This spectacle set all the small boys laughing at Uncle Bob, and the attention of the crowd was divided between the negro and the steamboat. Rein

ing his horse in the very edge of the river, the old man called out:

"I say, dah! Is de doctah on boa'd dah?"

The doctor was soon brought to the front of the crowd on the wharf-boat.

"I say, dah? Doctah! de cunnel's done had a stroke or sumpin. Tumbled right down in middle ob de flo'. Git on heah and go quick. Be mighty spry now, I say, else ye won't see no cunnel when ye git dah. He done be dead afo' ye git dah."

The doctor took the negro's place, and the horse was soon charging back again through the town, while the steamboat captain with reluctance pulled in his line and left without his passengers. The crowd felt that a serious illness on the part of Colonel Bonamy repaid them but poorly for their disappointment; but they fell at once to making the most of it, by disputing whether it was Colonel Bonamy who had been struck by Mark, or Mark who had been struck by apoplexy. Granny Tartrum's little boy ran home breathless to tell about it; and, rheumatics or no rheumatics, the old lady felt herself called upon to hobble into the street and assail the passer-by with all sorts of questions about the case. Who struck whom? What was it? Was he likely to live?

As the facts came to be known with clearness, some folks thought it a sin and a shame for a son to disobey his father, and be the death of him in that way. Pretty Christian he was, wasn't he, to be sure, now, for certain.

Some of the more lugubrious were sure that it was a judgment. Wasn't Uzzah slain for putting his hand upon the ark of God? Didn't Ananias and Sapphira die for lying? Colonel Bonamy'd learn not to oppose God, and it was

good for him, and served him right besides, and was no more than he deserved, over and above.

Nancy went home, carrying the bumble-bee with her, but vowing she'd pay 'em up. She somehow looked upon Colonel Bonamy's stroke as one of the means taken to defeat her by the family. But she'd pay 'em up, yet. Give her half a chance, and she'd git Mark away from that Adams girl. Roxy Adams wasn't no great shakes, that all the town should turn out to see her off, now. It might better have been herself than Roxy. She wouldn't have minded going to Texas with Mark.

And Whittaker, who had observed Nancy's curious behavior on the wharf-boat, went home, putting this and that together, troubling himself with forebodings about Roxy's future, and with griefs about his own disappointment, and with questionings whether he had done quite right or not. He, at least, had a bumble-bee in his head, for he walked the floor of the upper porch half the night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A MONITOR IN MASK.

THE next day after the passage of the "Duke of Orleans" being Sunday, Mother Tartrum contrived to keep the most conflicting rumors a-going in regard to the condition of Colonel Bonamy. She stood at the gate all day, hailing the negro messenger, the doctor going, the doctor returning, and everybody else, in turn, hearing where they had information, or thought they had, and telling her latest, where they had none.

On Monday morning Whittaker rose, after a sleepless night, and thought it his duty to call at Colonel Bonamy's, and inquire after his health. If, perchance, he were dead of apoplexy, the minister could condole with the family, and if he were better, he might sympathize with the patient. Anyhow, he would have a chance to speak with Mark about his plans of life, and he might happen to meet—say Amanda, or Janet, or—or well, yes, but that was not to be desired at all; though he might, by some strange accident, see Roxy herself. He did not admit to himself that the dull agony that had kept him awake the livelong night, promised to be quieted a little, if that he could but look into the face of Roxy, and hear her voice.

It was Roxy whom he met at the door, and who was startled at the wan look of his face. She asked him to sit on the vine-covered front porch, and she told him, in answer to his inquiries, that Colonel Bonamy was lying

quietly asleep in his room at the right; that he had had a stroke of paralysis from apoplexy; that his right side was quite powerless, but they hoped he would recover. She was dressed in a fresh calico, and her exertions for the sick man had brought back a little of the wonted look of peace, benevolence, and hopefulness to her face. When she could act in the direction natural to her, she was happy —when her energetic spirit was thwarted, it became an energetic temper; and the conflict between her irritability and her conscience produced the most morbid fitfulness of disposition. But now she could act with certainty and in straight lines again.

"You will not go to Texas yet?" said Mr. Whittaker.

"We do not know anything about the future. Our duty is very plain for the present." And Roxy put an emphasis on the last words that expressed her content at present release from the complexities of her life since her marriage.

"Good morning, Mr. Whittaker," said Janet. "Papa is awake now, and we can't understand what he wants. Roxy, you'll have to come. He says he wants 'Roly,' or something of the sort."

With a hasty "excuse me," and a "good morning," Roxy disappeared through the hall into the room of the sick man.

"Poor pappy!" said Janet, adhering to the older speech of the country in saying "pappy," "he is unable to speak plain, and he forgets the names of things. But Roxy guesses what he wants, and he wont have anybody about him but her. I suppose he meant her when he said 'Roly' just now. He calls me 'Jim.' But the doctor thinks he'll get well. If he does, it will be from Roxy's nursing."

Mr. Whittaker rose to depart, but just then Mark came out, and the two walked down between the Lombardies together. They were a fair contrast—Whittaker's straight form, rather light complexion, studious and scrupulous look, with Mark's well-nourished figure, waving black hair, and face that betokened a dangerous love of ease and pleasure. He told Whittaker that this stroke of his father's would perhaps do away entirely with the project of going to Texas. He would have to take charge of his father's business until his recovery.

"You will probably enter the ministry here in Indiana then?" said Whittaker.

"I don't know what I shall do."

Whittaker thought he saw that Mark's plans were already turning to other things. For, indeed, Mark felt that now he was relieved from any committal to the public or to Roxy in the matter of ministerial work, he would rather enter upon the tempting field of activity opened up by the passing into his hands of his father's business.

The sight of Roxy had been a pleasure to Whittaker, but five minutes in the sunshine only makes a coal-pit the blacker. He went home, thinking that, after all, paralysis of the body was better than his own paralysis of heart and purpose. But to shake off his lethargy was a difficult thing. His congregation was small, and did not occupy his time. His efforts at study were vague and vain. He had been fond of dabbling in language-study, but even his love of languages had died within him, and he turned the leaves of his dictionaries and thought of Roxy, and dreamed of might-have-beens without number.

On the afternoon of this same day, he sat with his head

leaning out of the window. There was a copy of Bossuet's "Oraisons Funêbres" by his side, but even that *funeste* reading could not attract his attention. He had too real a sense of the fact that life was indeed *néant, néant,* to care for Bossuet's pompous parade of its magnificent nothingness. For Bossuet manages to make nothingness seem to be something grand and substantial—even royal. One would be willing to be a king, for the sake of feeling this sublime nothingness and vanity that he describes so picturesquely.

Whittaker was leaning thus out of the window, and dreamily gazing at the pale green sycamores that will grow nowhere but fast by the rivers of waters, when there lighted on his head, with a sudden blow, a paper ball. He started, looked upward. There was nothing to be seen but the garret window in the gable above. But he had hardly looked away before another ball descended upon him. He knew very well what sprite had thrown them. He looked away again, this time with a smile; then turning his eyes upward, he caught the third paper missile full on his nose, and got sight of the mischief-full face of Twonnet, just as it was disappearing, with a sharp little cry of "Oh!" at seeing where the ball had struck.

"You are caught," he said, and then the blushing face re-appeared, looking exceedingly sweet, draped as it was by long curls hanging forward as she leaned out of the window, like Dante Rossetti's "Blessed Demozel" looking out of heaven.

"I wouldn't have done it," she said, "but you look so like a funeral to-day. I don't like to see you that way."

"How can I help it, Twonnet?"

Her face was serious for a moment. Then she laughed. "To think that you would ask advice of such a giddy rattle-pate as me. Everybody knows that I'm only a mischievous little fool with a shallow head, and besides I'm only a child, as you know. "See here!" She held a doll out of the window. "I've never quite given up doll-babies yet. I keep this old thing hid away in this end of the garret where nobody else ever comes, and I slip up here sometimes and play with it till I feel like a goose, and then I go down-stairs and try to be a woman. I wish I had sense enough and I would give you some advice.

"You've got more sense than you pretend to have. It might have been better for two or three people if I'd followed your advice and not Highbury's, before. If you wont hit me with any more paper balls I'd listen to anything you say. Some things are revealed to—little children."

"There, you call me a babe! That's worse than all. Now the advice I have to give is serious and I'm not ready yet. You ought to hear it from some one older than I am." And she withdrew her head.

Whittaker wondered what she meant. Was she waiting to frame into words what she had to say? Or, was she trying to get courage to say what she thought? Or, was she making game of him as she had of Highbury?

In a minute there appeared at the garret window the face of an old woman in frilled white cap and spectacles and a red neckerchief. The face seemed wrinkled and the voice was quivering and cracked. The words were uttered slowly and solemnly and with a pronunciation a little broken with a French accent.

"You must not think about *her* now. It is very bad. It will do harm to everybody. Get to work and

put far away these evil thoughts and wishes that can do no good. She is his and you *must* not think about her."

The head had disappeared before Whittaker could realize that it was but Twonnet in masquerade. He felt vexed that she had guessed the secret of his thoughts. Then he was lost in wonder at the keen penetration and deep seriousness hidden under this volatile exterior. And he was annoyed that she had ventured to rebuke him, a minister, and to imply that he was likely to go wrong. Then he honestly tried to see the truth of what she said. At any rate he resolved to think no more of Roxy.

But when the human mind gets down hub-deep into a rut of thinking, it is hard to lift it out. He could not study, or walk, or talk, without this numb paralysis of wishing and thinking creeping over him. It was in vain that he studied the tables of Italian definitions hung about his room. He could not remember them. He preferred reading Petrarch's sonnets to Lady Laura, which he had forbidden himself. This struggle went on for two days. Twonnet did not take any notice of it. She laughed and sang French *rondeaux* and English songs, and gamboled with the children, and chatted in superficial fashion with Mr. Whittaker, and scolded at things about the house that went wrong, until he was more than ever puzzled by this doubleness. He could not explain it, and he contented himself with calling her in his thoughts "that witch of a girl." He would have been yet more perplexed had he known that after her merriest laughter and her wildest frolics with the children, and her most bubbling and provoking banter, she would now and then elude the little sister "Teet" in some dark corner and escape to the garret where she could have a good

ery under the rafters. Then she would take up the old doll and caress it, saying, as the tears slowly dropped upon it:

"Nobody cares for *me*. Everybody loves Roxy because she is good. But nobody loves Twonnet—poor, wild, foolish, empty-headed Twonnet. Nobody loves me but you, old dolly."

And all this in the teeth and eyes of the fact that Dan Barlow, the newly arrived young lawyer, had walked home with her from church the Sunday evening before, and that more than one other would have offered her company at any time if there had not been a sly twinkle in her eyes that made them afraid of Twonnet's ridicule. But she cried in this inconsistent fashion and declared that nobody loved her. And five minutes after she would be dashing about the house, broom in hand, singing in a wild, reckless, cat-bird-like cheerfulness:

"Every lassie has her laddie,
Ne'er a ane hae I."

But beneath all this mirth and banter of the girl, Whittaker knew now that there lay the deep seriousness of the woman. How deep and serious her nature might be he could not tell. Conscience, shrewdness, courage—these he had seen. What else was there? At any rate he knew that Twonnet was expecting something of him. The vivacious, incomprehensible Swiss prattler had become a monitor to the grave minister, all the more efficient that she said no more than enough. So it came to pass that the soul of the man awoke and said to himself: "Whittaker, you are bad. You are thinking and dreaming about another man's wife and what might have been

This is a good way to be worthless or wicked. You must get to work."

And after a good lecture to himself he said to Twonnet:

"I am going to start a school."

"That's good; I will go. But I am a dull scholar. I hate arithmetic and all my teachers hate me."

That was all the response he got.

CHAPTER XXXV

BACKSLIDINGS.

As the days grew shorter and the night frosts began to give tone to the atmosphere, Colonel Bonamy gradually improved in strength under the care of Roxy. He was very lame and walked with difficulty, leaning on the arm of his daughter-in-law. They would go down between the Lombardy poplars, through the front gate, across the open commons to the river-bank, where he would stare awhile in vacant fashion on the broad water and then petulantly demand to be taken back to the house. His faculties were evidently weakened; when he wanted his hat he would demand his boots, and he called his watch his knife. Nouns, proper and common, were hopelessly mixed in his mind; he almost never called anything by the right name, though he seemed generally to keep some sort of hold of the initial sounds. By some kind of quick sympathy Roxy was able to guess at his meaning and he always preferred to have her with him.

Amanda held toward her sister-in-law an air of patronizing toleration. Colonel Bonamy liked Roxy, in a selfish way, as the best nurse of all; but he could not endure that she should give Bobo a part of her kindness. So for the most part she taught the lad in another room for a short half-hour each day, getting scolded by her father-in-law on her return.

"Now, Roly, I know what you've been doing," he would

say, with a querulous paralytic lisp. "You've been trying to teach little Bubble Ham. But you can't teach him He wont learn a shingle liver. No blubbers in his head Give me a goggle of fresh wash; I'm thirsty. Don't go away again."

But Roxy's chief trouble was not Amanda nor the colonel, but Mark. For, sisters-in-law and fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, despite all stale jokes about them, chiefly trouble a body as the ailments of somebody else do —through the sympathies. Real troubles are nearer of kin. More and more Roxy saw Mark drifting utterly away from all the missionary enthusiasms that gave significance to life in her eyes. At first this showed itself only in a total absorption in the large law business which had suddenly fallen into his hands. He knew that the eyes of court, clients and lawyers were on him, questioning whether he would or could take his father's place, should the senior remain disabled. He knew that the public was wondering whether he or the energetic and able Dan Barlow, who had lately come down from the eastern end of the county, would lead the bar. The pursuits in which he now engaged were more congenial to his nature than preaching, and he took them up again with eagerness. Law business gave a delightful play to his active mental faculties; the conflict of the court-room stirred his combativeness, and victory pleased his ambitious vanity.

He threw himself with fiery impetuosity into the half-prepared cases of his father, and carried them through to success; he more than held his own against young Barlow, and new business began to come to him freely. He was not a man to be insensible to this sudden opening of a prospect of wealth and reputation.

Luther might not have been an iconoclast if he had not

begun by being a monk; and Mark might have reached an average piety, if he had not striven for more. He had been held by external influences at a pitch of self-sacrifice foreign to his temper, and the reaction was rapid and dangerous. In three weeks after the Texas mission was given up, Roxy could see that all thinking and talking about religious matters grew irksome to him. He declined all requests to preach on the ground that he was overworked, and it was evident that even his license to preach would soon become hateful.

Those who had before admired his zeal lamented his backsliding. The severe ordeal of the Methodist confessional he shrunk from. He might have talked platitudes in class-meeting; but hypocrisy of that sort he did not like, and so he stayed away, consulting his own comfort in this, as he did in everything. When he went to church he did not sit any more among the great lights in the amen corner, but drifted gradually back until he found a seat aft the box-stove, which held a central place in the church, and was a sort of landmark dividing the sheep from the goats. On many Sundays he was so tired that he would not go to church at all; he wanted to rest and keep his father company in the absence of Roxy. But, for the most part on such occasions, he walked up and down in the warmish winter sunshine, and in colder weather watched the grinding cakes of floating ice in the river, while he planned his business. When Roxy was well out of sight, he even wrote a little now and then on unfinished pleadings. The thoughtful Amanda generally contrived to let Roxy know that Mark had been writing —such interest do we take in another's happiness.

Roxy was surprised at finding that marriage had not increased, but lessened her influence over Mark. A wife

is something so different from a sweetheart! There is nc poetic halo about a wife; she is one of the commonest of commonplaces, like one of those every-day forces of nature to which one submits when one pleases or when one must, but which one never scruples to evade when one wishes to and can! The interest of a sweetheart in your welfare is something flattering; your wife's interest is a matter of course,—an interest *ex officio*. It is an act of the highest grace to yield to the entreaty of a sweetheart; the beseeching of a wife seems more like a behest; it is to be resisted, according to the maxim that vigilance is the lowest market price of liberty.

Mark respected Roxy's enthusiasm. But he was tired of the strain on his easy disposition. He could not live at a moral concert-pitch, and every attempt to bring him back to the old way of feeling and thinking only irritated him, and deepened his resolution to brook no further restraint. He was not sure that he did not owe himself certain compensations for what he had suffered in the past.

The prospect of his soon inheriting his father's property had increased his importance in the town, and the state of being important is not disagreeable to the self-love of any man. Mark's old visions of political ascendency again dominated over him, and he bent all his energies to satisfy his ambition. He was young, and full of vigorous life, rich, as the country went,—popular, and with a great capacity for enjoyment. It is easy for such a man not to be religious, it is hard for such a man to be religious after the fashion of thirty years ago.

To add to the embarrassment of Roxy's situation, her sensitive father would not cross the Bonamy threshold, and it was not often that she could get away to see him, and

then it was only to take a scolding for her folly in "wearing herself out" with taking care of Colonel Bonamy, and teaching Bobo. "An imbecile and an idiot!" Adams thundered.

Mark was often absent, while attending to business on other parts of the judicial circuit, and Roxy felt, with terror, when he returned, how far away, the one from the other, they were drifting. Mark's pleasure-loving disposition had revived with increased power since his long self-restraint. He was the leader of every party in wit and buoyant spirits, and to be leader was to be happy. He was happier away from home, where he was petted and admired, than he was at home, where he was under condemnation.

Roxy's temper did not stand the strain very well. Hers was a character noble in the direction of action, and self-sacrifice for an object. But the higher nobility of patient endurance of suffering, inevitable and apparently useless, she had not yet learned. Against Mark's neglect of her advice, his carelessness for her society, and the general disappointment and inactivity of her life, she rebelled bitterly. Only a high-spirited woman can undertake such a life as Roxy proposed, and no high-mettled woman can brook neglect. She had too much elevation to enjoy the only life that offered itself to her. She had not yet, at least, elevation enough to accept with peace and patience what she could not avoid. A young person full of energy is apt to beat against the impenetrable and insurmountable walls of fate. After awhile, one learns that this beating wound; the one who beats and flutters, but affects not a jot the wall. Then the imprisoned yields, it may be with a cheerful make-the-best-of-it, it may be with a sullen and sulky despair, it may be with querulous and hopeless

longing. Roxy had yet to find out that she could not beat down the wall.

The opportunities for Mark's ambition came to him rapidly. The death of the member for Luzerne County left a vacancy in the legislature; a new election was ordered, and the Whigs, seeing a chance to seize once more a representation which they had not held since Mark's previous election, nominated him again for the place. The canvass was short and vigorous, and Mark won the election. He was just two weeks in the legislature,—a leader in all the boisterous fun that members of the legislature find so necessary for recreation. Until this time, Mark had so far preserved his Methodism that he did not drink spirits or gamble; but when he came back, Roxy felt sure that this line also had been passed.

A collision of some kind with the severe discipline of the old-fashioned Methodism was not to be avoided by any one taking Mark's road. His prominence would only serve to insure his not being overlooked. Roxy awaited this inevitable collision with hope and fear. It might startle Mark into some kind of recoil from the downward tendency of his present course of greedy ambition and lazy self-indulgence; but it might break all the restraints that held him. For the moral restraints of habit are but so many lines at which one stops—with every line obliterated there are the fewer checks in the way of the impetuous man. Unhappily, the first collision was on one of those restrictions so often insisted upon by religionists, with a stress in inverse ratio to their importance. Mark went to a circus. A man in that time might be a miser, he might be dishonest in a mild way, he might be censorious and a backbiter from a pious stand-point, he might put the biggest apples on the top of the barrel or the little

potatoes in the bottom of the bag, and the church could not reach him. But let him once see a man ride on two bare-back horses, and jump through a hoop! That was a tangible apostasy, sure to bring ecclesiastical penalties.

Brave old ironside forefathers! Blessings on you for chopping Charles Stuart's head off, and planting Plymouth Rock! You freed us from the Middle Ages; for which thanks. But you straightway bound upon us your own severe prejudices, and they have come down to us by all hands. The most dominant influence in this English-speaking world of ours to-day, is not that of Shakspere, but of the men who hated him and his play-house. The Puritan preachers, the brave cobblers and tinkers, whom the seventeenth century stuck in the stocks and prison-houses, and the fervent Wesleyan village blacksmiths and Yorkshire farmers of the eighteenth century are yet masters of the nineteenth. To this day we take our most innocent amusements in a guilty and apologetic fashion, bowing to the venerable prejudice, and saying: "By your leave, sir."

Mark was called before the church, with other like offenders. His pride was wounded, and he would fain have thrown up his membership, but that he could not quite resist the entreaties of Roxy. As it was, he surrendered his license to preach, and expressed his sorrow that he had offended, and solemnly promised not to go to a circus again; not a hard promise, surely.

But though Mark had apologized, he was now entirely estranged from the influences of the church. For discipline may save the credit of the church, at the expense of destroying the offender. It seems never to have occurred to people that it is sometimes the business of a church to suffer, the just for the unjust.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN IMPROPER FRACTION.

It was in October that Whittaker took his resolution to start a school. He got consent of Mr. Highbury and the other trustees to use the church. With a true Yankee ingenuity, he hinged a writing shelf to the back of each pew, so that it could be dropped down out of the way in church time. He introduced the improved methods of teaching of that day, to the great surprise of those who had never seen anything but the barbarous school discipline of the beech-switch pedagogues. He could teach Latin and algebra, and a schoolmaster who knew these wonderful things was indeed a Solomon. All the country had heard that Whittaker knew nearly all the languages of the earth except the red Indian. This last Mother Tartrum assured people he did not know. She had met him on the street, and asked him point-blank. And he had to confess that he couldn't read and write Indian. So that exception was admitted.

In a country town, no young woman not married, and no man not settled in business for himself, is too great to go to school. Nearly all the grown-up young people availed themselves of the setting up of this school to "finish" their education, hitherto much broken by the intermittent nature of the old district schools, which taught the three R's only so long as there was school-money to be had. Twonnet was enrolled among Whittaker's scholars, and

Janet Bonamy, who had heretofore been sent to Kentucky to school, now concluded to get a little more knowledge.

Twonnet Lefaure was a sort of leader of the school in good-natured mischief. She was vivacious and witty, in talk and laughter like Tennyson's brook, going on forever, but she could not get her lessons. Whittaker was surprised to find that the Swiss, who in business were the abler and generally the richer people of the town, who, as far as affairs went, were quick and penetrating, were yet slow in taking knowledge from teacher and text-books. It was in school hours that the Americans were superior.

Twonnet tried to study. She even cried over her "sums" in vulgar fractions, but crying did no good. Common denominators and common multiples, multiplications and divisions of compound and complex fractions, swam in her head in a general confusion, and Kirkham's rules about nominative cases governing verbs, and prepositions governing objective cases were quite unintelligible.

"How do you reduce an improper fraction?" the teacher asked her one afternoon in the arithmetic recitation.

She drew her mouth down, wrinkled her forehead, concentrated her wandering thoughts, and replied, with a hit-or-miss desperateness: "Multiply the greatest common denominator of the integer by the least common divisor—no multiple—of the whole number, and write the remainder for the numerator of the mixed number."

"Twonnet!" said the master, and he looked at her sternly, while the class laughed. He could hardly bear to rebuke her. There was something so inexpressibly refreshing in her mobile face and quick bright eyes. But there must be no partiality. "Twonnet! You are not wanting in intelligence. You can learn if you will. If

you had spent the time in studying that you spent in spelling on your fingers across the room, you would have been able to answer my question. Go to your seat now, and say this rule after school. I shall expect you to understand it."

Poor Twonnet, of all things, could not help wishing to stand well with Whittaker. She pouted, and went to her seat. She read over and over a page of Ray's arithmetic about improper fractions, without understanding its abstractions. Janet Bonamy, who sat next to her, surreptitiously gave her all kinds of hints, but Janet's comments did not help the matter at all. When at last the gloaming of the snowy winter's eve began to mellow the light on the white walls of the church, and Whittaker had sent away the school, he found himself alone with Twonnet. He was not prepared for this. He had expected to have other culprits, in whose presence he could scold Twonnet. But there she sat, drawn near to a window for light, looking poutingly at the incomprehensible words about improper fractions and mixed numbers.

Whittaker sat still a moment at his desk after all had gone and the door was closed. He could not quite summon courage to speak to her as justice demanded. In awkward embarrassment he arose from his place, walked to the stove, poked the fire a little, then turned back again to his desk, all the time watching furtively the pouting face of his pupil.

"Twonnet," he said presently, with great gentleness, "you'd better bring your book here. I think I can make you understand."

"I don't understand it, and I can't!" she said, vehemently, as she threw the book down on his desk.

"I'm sorry," said Whittaker, with kindness, and the

IMPROPER FRACTIONS.

tones of his voice made Twonnet cry, in spite of herself. "Sit here by the window."

Whittaker, in an abstract way, had a contempt for people who could not learn easily, but he could not feel so toward this girl. She had shown herself his superior in other things. And besides, he found her presence here in the snowy evening like a benediction. He went over the explanation two or three times. Somehow he was not in a hurry.

"It's of no use," lamented Twonnet, "I can't understand anything. I haven't any head," and she shook her brown curls about her face and looked out the window.

It was not considered proper for a teacher to praise a pupil in those days. But her evident distress touched the man. His voice trembled a little when he said:

"You have a superior mind and a very superior heart—"

But this set Twonnet a-crying again.

Not knowing what to do Whittaker at last hit upon a plan very much in advance of the methods of that time. He took out of his desk two apples captured from unlucky boys in school hours. Trimming the one that was bitten down to a half, he put it with the whole one, and Twonnet, amused now at the curious action and quick enough at perception of the concrete, understood at once what a mixed number was. Then he divided the whole apple and the half into quarters and made an improper fraction, telling her to write it on the slate. Then he made her reduce it again to a mixed number, and then he cut it into eighths and made other fractions. But it was getting dark and Whittaker hurriedly closed the church and walked home with Twonnet, whose spirits were entirely restored. He enjoyed her society as one does that of a child.

At the supper-table Twonnet surprised everybody by

taking two biscuits at once. She cut off half of one and laid it off her plate. Then addressing the younger children who sat near her, she began:

"This is a mixed number, one and a half, you see." The imitation of Whittaker's hesitant tones and New England accent were so perfect that Isabelle and Adolphe were set laughing at once.

"Toinette, que fais-tu?" said her father, not quite understanding what mischief she was at.

Mr. Whittaker smiled and reddened.

"Je donne une leçon d'arithmétique à mon frère," she answered with simplicity. "Now you, Adolphe, I cut this into quarters—six quarters are made. That is an improper fraction because it is more than a whole number."

At this the children and Whittaker all laughed, even Petite Julie joined with them, and the father saw plainly that Twonnet was mimicking Whittaker's manners.

"Tais-toi, Toinette!" he said.

"Yes, sir," said the incorrigible girl, speaking now to her father but holding fast to the minister's tone and manner, "but if these children would only think of something besides play I wouldn't have to cut up my biscuits to get knowledge into their shallow minds."

She closed this with an angular gesture and an inflection peculiar to Whittaker, and so set the table in a roar, while she looked round inquiringly as one who would say, "Why this merriment?"

"Tais-toi, je te dis!" cried her father, all the more angry that she had provoked even him to laughter.

Whittaker did not like being laughed at,—who does? But in his life of dry application and stern propriety the girl's daring animal spirits were as refreshing as a well in

a desert. Nevertheless, he reflected, when alone in his room, that she was of inferior mental ability, for she could not master her lessons easily, and then her laughter about it seemed flippant and frivolous. So unlike Roxy, over whom even yet he could not quite help sighing! But this theory of the flippancy of Twonnet's character was disturbed by what he knew of her at other times, and he fell back upon his old conclusion that there was something about the strange girl he could not make out.

He did not know that she had her cry in the garret the next morning when she told the old doll that nobody would ever, ever love her because she did not know anything and had no head at all

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DIVISIONS.

It does seem that matrimony might be improved "in this progressive age." How is it that there is no method by which a husband can be guaranteed? When one considers how often a woman who has married a saint of twenty-five finds in ten years that by some transformation she is wedded to a middle-aged sinner, it really seems that there ought to be bondsmen who should stand surety that the piety, industry and supple courtesy of the bridegroom shall be perpetually maintained at the standard of the days of courtship. A husband warranted to keep in any climate and to stand the test of extraordinary temptations without molding or deteriorating in any respect would be most desirable. In how few cases do women find the goods "as represented." Indeed, it seems that the durability of a husband's good qualities does not enter into the thought of a bride. All men are unchangeable in the eyes of their sweethearts. Does it never occur to a young woman who inquires anxiously whether a certain sort of dry goods "will wash," to ask also whether a fair-seeming young man has fast colors in his character, or whether after the first scrubbing that adverse circumstances shall give him, he will come out a faded rag?

Here was Roxy, who had loved and married a heroic missionary, impatient to brave malaria, alligators, and persecution in the republic of Texas, for the kingdom of

heaven's sake. In three-quarters of a year she finds that she is married to a popular young lawyer, eager for small political honors, and caring nothing for missions and precious little for the kingdom of heaven. By some enchantment the man she had married is changed to another; one restraint after another is slipping away. To what kind of a man will she be wedded in an another year?

But it is not the husband alone that needs to be warranted. If Mark had ceased to be the blazing comet of the religious firmament of Luzerne, Roxy's steadier light also paled. The differences of thought and feeling between the two were so great that Roxy had now a constant sense of being half deserted, though Mark would have resented a charge of neglecting her. Mark, indeed, found to his surprise that he had not married the meek and inoffensive saint he thought. The shoe-maker's daughter developed the shoe-maker's temper. She put Amanda's innuendoes and Mark's heedlessness together. Whether she spoke her reprehension of Mark's ways, or whether she kept silence, he knew that she was offended with him. Roxy began to back-slide—so it seemed to the church-members. For, from her constant perturbation of mind and her constant irritation of temper, she was ever in a state of self-reproach. She went to all the meetings, but she no longer took a leading part. She sat off, as one apart from the rest; she spoke with reserve; she treated her old friends shyly, and they said that her position and the temptations of this world had led her away from the cross and made her too proud to meet her friends cordially. For often a reserve that hides a bitter humiliation seems to be haughtiness.

Is it any wonder that Mark felt his marriage a disappointment? He had given Roxy social position, every

comfort, liberty to be as pious as she pleased, a house with a row of aristocratic Lombardy poplars, the Bonamy name. He had asked nothing on the other hand but liberty to do as he pleased. And now because she could not domineer over him and keep him from the career that his gifts fitted him for, she was unhappy and ill-tempered. Was there a more inoffensive, easy-going and kind-hearted husband in the world than he? He gave Roxy everything. Do you wonder that he was angry and stubborn when he thought of her dissatisfaction?—that he determined not to be controlled by a woman?—that he showed his defiance by doing what he knew she most disliked him to do? Mark Bonamy's friends should know that he was a man with a mind of his own. Many a man sacrifices possible happiness to his vanity.

Amanda, by indirect means, encouraged this state of mind in Mark. Not that she had any definite purpose in making mischief. Mischief-makers hardly ever do; they make mischief from an appetite—in a sort of devilish enjoyment of the upsetting they produce. Besides, it was not pleasant to Amanda to have Roxy the chosen nurse of her father. She inly believed that Roxy had interested motives. And mother Tartrum had evolved a similar theory from the shallows of her own consciousness. Roxy was looking out for the will.

But Roxy found her former self only in what she did for Colonel Bonamy and Bobo. She read to the old man. Sometimes she tried to awaken a religious sense in him, but he only smiled or spoke petulantly. It was hard to trace the action of his mind. To the controversy about Texas and the misson he never alluded. He did not seem much interested in Mark's success. A state of general apathy or petulant indifference seemed to have supervened

on his life of restless and energetic action. He was relieved when the spring came again. With the aid of his cane he promenaded, on clear days, up and down the front porch, hobbling and holding by the balusters at times. What he thought or felt, or whether he thought of anything or felt aught beyond his physical ailments, Roxy could not guess. His mind seemed a little stronger than at first and his hold on the nouns came to be firmer in proportion.

Roxy used to wish that some of his old combativeness might return; then she might come to know without humbling herself to ask, just what there was in his allusion to Nancy Kirtley.

As for Nancy, when she had found that Mark was to remain within reach she had given up all thought of berating him or his wife. There might be a chance for revenge more to her taste. She had no very definite idea of what this possible revenge was, or what it might lead to. She was impelled by blind forces within her to seek conquest, to gratify vanity and resentment, to use craft. She had no more forethought of the ultimate result of a course of action, and hardly any more freedom of will, than an animal. She had all the qualities of her race Her ancestors delighted only in the craft, the pursuit, the victory and the destructiveness of the chase. Nancy had the same elements in her character; her weapons and her game were different. That was all. She was still, like them, a beast of prey. Even her resentments were as unreasonable as blind impulse could make them. It was not Mark whom she hated, it was Roxy. Now that the "old man Bonamy," as she styled him, "had the palsy bad," and Roxy was likely soon to be mistress of the Lombardy poplars and the brick house, she found another

reason for malice. In her primitive state of savagery, the sense of right and wrong had only reached a point according to which everything she desired ought to have been hers. She wanted Mark and what pertained to him, therefore she had been robbed by her who possessed him. And she meant "to be even some day." Such was her notion of equity and retributive justice. In moral culture she had not got beyond the age of stone hatchets. The purpose of revenge grew to be part of her very nature, it mixed itself with and intensified her passion for Bonamy; it became the most desirable object in the world to her pride. She exulted at the thought of a victory she meant to win, when everybody would see that she, Nancy Kirtley, knew how to get even with that hateful Adams girl, and "pay her back."

Nancy did not find much opportunity to try her blandishments on Mark. She and her sister-in-law, the drayman's wife, did not get on harmoniously together, and it was not possible for her to remain in her brother's house more than a day or two at a time. By the end of two days spent together, the incompatibility of the two women generally reached a climax, and separation became inevitable. Whereupon Nancy would return to Rocky Fork, and while away her time in dazzling the rustic beaus, according to her wont, keeping half the young men and all the young women of the neighborhood in a state of distraction.

In her occasional trips to town, she had only chance conversations with Mark on the street. In these interviews Mark treated her with off-hand cordiality, partly because he was afraid of her, but partly also because he could not but feel the fascination of her physical perfectness.

Nancy saw with delight that McGowan, the most devoted of her lovers, was waxing desperate under her treatment. She alternately fascinated and froze him. She was "like the second-day ager," Jim said. "She was now this away, now that away. Some days she was all shiney-like and sweet; and then the very next day she looked at him so as to make the cold chills run down his back."

Nancy took so much pleasure in the cat-like sense of power she had in playing with the hopes and fears of the poor fellow, who was thus beyond escape the prey of her fascinations, that she was delighted to see him in these days often intoxicated. She knew that everybody would say that she had "played the devil with Jim," and that was a tribute to her power. Her pleasure at having thus enmeshed him tended to abate her resentment toward Roxy; but that resentment was suddenly fanned into a new flame.

As McGowan went past the cabin of the Kirtleys one evening early in June, just enough intoxicated to be defiant, he reined up his horses and began to call Nancy. The girl was wonderfully amused at his inebriate condition, and she came out prepared to enjoy it.

"Nance," said Jim, looking at her with suppressed glee, "ole Bonamy's dead. Had another fit to-day, and cleared out. Guess the money's gone to Mark. Git up!"

And Jim comforted himself for the next mile by chuck ling in his inebriety, "I made her mad that time. Won't ole sis hop around now? Hoop!"

And could he have heard the denunciations of Roxy to which Nancy gave vent when he was gone, his drunken malice would have been content. Nancy's one consolation

was that she would "get even," and "pay her back yet." She began her revenge by quarrelling with her mother, and making the house so hot that even the thick-skinned old Gid left the old woman and her youngest child to "have it out," while he went over to Canaan and got his twisted bottle filled.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GOING WRONG.

Colonel Bonamy died sitting in his chair on the porch while Roxy was reading to him. That is all there is to say about it, except that there was a very large concourse at the funeral. It is quite worth while to be a leading man in one's town, if one wants to be followed to the grave by a great procession of indifferent people, and discussed adversely by all the gossips of the county. Of what use was Colonel Bonamy's money now? The unanswerableness of this question gave great satisfaction to those who had envied him all his life. "He couldn't take the money with him." "Wonder if his property will do him any good where he's gone?" "Guess he's found out to his satisfaction by this time whether there's any here after." It is a great comfort to us all that death brings everybody to a level at last.

All the world, as the French say, had talked about Mark's backsliding, and now all the world wondered whether this solemn warning would do him any good. Mark was not without feeling, though he had never loved his father, except with what might be called a conventional affection. He shed conventional tears, and felt a conventional sorrow. He really thought himself bereaved, and, in a conventional way, he was bereaved. He did feel touched to have so active a force as his father had been, wholly gone out of his life. He went softly for a while.

He attended church for two consecutive Sundays, and once even staid to class-meeting with Roxy.

But the habits of life he had been forming were too congenial to his ambitious and self-indulgent nature to be easily broken. When the will was read, it was found that fully one-half of the property was his. Stepping at once into the position of a rich man—rich, as the times and the town went—was not a means of grace to a young man prone to regard himself as the most important person within the horizon, and to deduce from that importance an inference of self-indulgence. It surely is not needful that I weary the reader with the story of his moral decline during the year following his father's death. Look into the face of your next neighbor, and perhaps you can read this same trite story of vanity and egotism, ambition and self-indulgence, pampered by the flattery of friends. It is one of the oldest stories in the world. Nevertheless, this world of ours, which is always learning and ever forgetting, never fails to be filled with surprise when a man of ability travels in this way—the "easy descent to perdition." Hasn't a smart man sense enough not to walk straight into the fire? But it is the smartness that helps to drive a man sometimes,—the smartness and the power of intense enjoyment and of intense suffering that a man of active faculties possesses,—the intoxication that comes of flattery and success,—the provocations to pleasure that beset a man of vivid imagination above all his fellows. The dull man is only tried by those temptations that can reach his senses; the man of imagination is be-deviled by a thousand sirens that others never see, and he has the power of putting garments of light on Diabolus, for his own delectation. If you will add to all this the self-confidence that is fed by a sense of power, you will have some

of the elements that make men of quick intelligence walk face forward into moral perdition. Genius is, indeed, "the worst horse in the stable," as says the clown. A little helm for a little ship, but a greater vessel needs a larger rudder, and woe to him who has imagination and mental activity and passion, disproportioned to his moral sense.

It matters not to this story that I shall tell you how Amanda Bonamy was married. It was not a marriage you would care to hear about. A matter of active, pushing, self-seeking young Benjamin Barlow, attorney and counselor-at-law, on the one side, and Miss Amanda Bonamy and ten thousand dollars on the other. Roxy's life was all the less unhappy after Amanda had moved to the other end of the village, though she could not help hearing repeated the words by which Mrs. Barlow suggested to her friends that it was hardly fair that Roxy Adams should have crowded her out of the house her father built. And all the town imagined that the luckiest woman of all the town was the shoe-maker's daughter, whose principal occupation in life it was to entertain the local politicians in the brick house behind the two rows of Lombardies, which stood like stiff grenadiers guarding the entrance. Her distaste for her occupations and her sharp discipline in living under the surveillance of Amanda, had given her an air that passed among superficial observers for hauteur. The politicians, when they were her guests at dinner, thought her proud. Her old neighbors deemed that she "put on airs," and consoled themselves by remembering how poor she had been.

So came the summer of 1843. Mark's father had been dead a year. Mark's habits in the matter of occasional drinking and frequent gambling for small amounts had

come to be so well known that he preferred to withdraw from the church rather than to fall under discipline again. His ambition was now his consuming passion. The Whig victory of 1840 had been barren enough. It had brought the party nothing but chagrin and John Tyler. Despite the all-prevailing Millerite excitement about the end of the world, the Whigs were now preparing to win victory, if possible, once more in 1844. And Mark was so absorbed with desire to be the candidate for Congress in that next year's campaign that more than ever he became uncongenial to his home and his home distasteful to him.

For the more he wandered the more did Roxy, like many another wife, seek to make atonement for his sins by redoubled faithfulness and severity in her own Christian life. Not that she would have confessed any belief in the transferable value of works of supererogation. But we all believe in our secret superstitious selves many things that would horrify us if written out in creeds. And had she not been taught by ministers of every name, that the incessant prayer of a faithful wife would surely be answered? Her growing austerity was partly for Mark's sake, and this growing austerity repelled the husband she sought to reclaim.

What a reconciler of uncongenialities may a child become! Given a child and there is at least one strong common interest, for when man and wife are partners in a new life there are a thousand things to draw them together. But there was no heir to the Bonamy home and the Bonamy ascendancy. So that Amanda being married and Janet having found the discord between Mark and his wife uncomfortable and having betaken herself to a residence with a widowed aunt in Louisville, Roxy's life was lonely, inactive and unhappy. Disappointments that

would have made some women viragoes, made Roxy austere. She was afraid that in the temptations about her she should somehow "compromise her religion," as the phrase went. Much of her attitude of censure and rebuke toward Mark came from this resolution not to compromise her integrity in any way.

There was only one person who profited by Roxy's unhappiness. All the wealth of her love and benevolence were poured out upon Bobo, whose intelligence slowly increased under her teaching. He could read a little now, and he learned to recite a great deal of poetry, but his understanding was very one-sided and lame. Mark disliked him with a sort of jealousy, and he in turn shrank away from Mark, and so he added to the division of feeling in the house.

As Roxy's loneliness increased the old intimacy with Twonnet came back by degrees. But there was always a little sacred fiction kept up between them. Both pretended that Roxy's married life was happy, both knew that the pretense was a hollow one, and both knew that its hollowness deceived neither of them. But there are some hypocrisies that are purely provisional,—meant to impose on no one, but only to furnish a basis for possible intercourse. Any confession of her unhappiness on Roxy's part would have put an end to the intimacy at once.

As for Twonnet, life went on with her much as ever. She still attended in the winter Mr. Whittaker's school. She still cried over her lessons. She still tormented the good man with her mischief. And though he had a sense of being perpetually ridiculous in her eyes she was the one piquant element in his life full of dry and dusty application to duty. He had come by degrees to tolerate her slowness in getting her lessons, though he could not

understand how so stupid a student could be so bright a woman. For woman he knew she was,—a woman hiding yet under the mask of a merry and thoughtless girl. He understood enough of her to guess at her purpose in seeing so much of Roxy. And when one evening in the latter part of the September of 1843, Twonnet came back from Roxy's with a sobered face, Whittaker guessed that the uncongeniality in the house behind the poplars had brought on some kind of a climax.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE EASY ROAD DOWNWARD.

When a man abides in a mine and sees no sunlight he cannot know when there come over him crookedness and purblindness, but crookedness and purblindness come. When a man digs in the caverns of conceit, of self-indulgence, of sensuality, he may not see the change that comes over him, but sooner or later he is transformed, and when at last he tries to shake off the goblin shape he wonders perhaps when it was that his erect soul became so distorted by darkness and burdens. No man falls like Lucifer from heaven—the progress of evil is slow and not easily perceived. If thou hast defeated Circe, and escaped all swinish transformations then mayest thou proceed in safety and resist the sirens.

Perhaps it was because Roxy felt by intuition the steady decline of Mark's tone, that she took so strong a course of opposition to things that, by themselves, were hardly worthy the serious treatment she gave them. And it was no doubt because Mark was prone to take lightly his own peccadilloes because they were his own, that he counted Roxy unreasonably severe and domineering. An act that seemed grave to her because it was symptomatic was utterly trivial to him, accustomed as he was to see himself always in the light of his own unclouded complacency And because he judged Roxy to be harsh and unreasonable he threw off her influence wholly.

In order to bring about his own nomination to Congress in 1844 it was necessary to secure the election of his brother-in-law Barlow to the legislature in the previous year, that Bonamy's supporters might have the prestige of success in their own county. It was Mark's great recommendation that he had popularity enough to carry a Democratic county. And now Barlow was to help Mark to conquer if Bonamy would help him to the legislature. It was in fulfillment of his part of this compact that Mark prepared to ride to the Republican meeting-house just before the election. Barlow was strong in the eastern end of the county, but he needed help in the northwest where Mark had some friends.

"You will remember," said Bonamy, "that I shall expect the same kind of service from you next year. We must hold together and win, whatever we do."

"Yes," said Barlow. "But if you want to succeed you'd better stop asking people home to dinner. Your wife is peculiar and people think——"

"Now Barlow," said Mark, "that'll do. My wife is not to be discussed even by my brother-in-law."

But Mark went home angry. His wife not only vexed him with foolish scruples, but she stood between him and success. She was a clog. She weighed him down. He felt sorry for himself. Poor fellow! What a pity that he had married a cobbler's girl, who never would rise to her station. That she was unfit for her position he had now conclusive evidence. The township magnates were not conciliated by her. And Mark, who hoped by dint of his smartness and family position to win Congress at the very start of his life, found himself balked by an unlucky marriage to a woman who was smart enough, but with no largeness of aspiration.

I doubt not many another woman not wanting in quality would have been a dead weight to Mark in such circumstances. Imagine Jacqueline Pascal entertaining at dinner the most influential blacksmith in Posey township and the capacious hotel-keeper of Braytown, in the interest of a husband's election to the American Congress. It is just possible that good Hannah More, or enthusiastic Eugénie de Guérin, for instance, would neither of them, in Roxy's situation, have laughed heartily enough at the funny stories of the landlord, which he himself emphasized with uproarious mirth. Even Maria Hare or Madame de Meulan-Guizot would probably have failed to show sufficient interest in the blacksmith's account of his wife's achievements in making "blue-dye" by a method her grandmother learned in Tennessee. There are limitations of excellences as well as of defects.

But the more Mark thought about it, the more grievous it seemed to him that all the bright prospects of his life should be blighted by Roxy's unwillingness to help him. Of course it is not the business of a husband to consider whether a wife's hopes are clouded. The rib came from Adam's side, and the woman was made for man. Barlow's words about Roxy rankled. The next morning, as Mark put a few needful things into his saddle-bags before starting away, he nerved himself to deliver a serious protest to Roxy. It is a little hard to declaim to a clairvoyant woman, who gives one the uncomfortable feeling that she is looking through all small hypocrisies. But it must be done sometimes.

Mark began in a tone of appeal, as of one who has suffered many things.

"Roxy, I do wish you could be a little more—obliging—and—polite, you know, to the people I ask here to din

ner. They are common, country people ; but you oughtn't to look down on them."

"I look down on them!" And Roxy turned full upon him her wide-open, wondering, guileless eyes. "I hope I don't look down on anybody."

"But then you—you might say pleasant things to them about their wives and children and their—their affairs. Make them feel happy. Amanda flatters everybody that comes to her house, and she will make Ben's fortune if she keeps on. People go away from here and say you are proud."

Roxy's eyes fell.

"I can't say such things as Amanda does. She pretends to like people that she doesn't like. The people you bring here are rough, tricky, and drinking men. I can't bear them."

Mark winced under this. There was a latent consciousness that in the particulars she named he was growing more like these men, and he suspected a thrust at himself. He slowly rolled up his leggins and stuffed them into his saddle-bags.

"I think you might take some interest in my affairs." Mark's strong refuge was a constant sympathy with his own sorrows.

"But I can't tell lies, Mark, and you oughtn't to ask *that*. I haven't any heart for this whole business. It ruins my husband. He comes home to me smelling of spirits; he brings home men whom he ought to despise; he thinks of nothing but of winning an office, and he goes with men that do him harm, I'm sure. Oh, Mark! ——"

But Roxy broke down here and left her appeal unuttered. It is a woman's way, and very exasperating to a man, to break into unanswerable silence or eloquent tears

in the middle of a controversy. But Mark had now thoroughly lost his temper, and his voice assumed a rasping harshness quite unusual with him.

"This is the honor you show your husband. I've given you every comfort, and a high social position; but you care more for that idiot Bobo than for me. You take no interest in my affairs because I won't turn preacher and go moping around like Whittaker."

The mention of Whittaker at this point stung Roxy far more than Mark intended. Quick as a flash there sprang into view in her mind a most disloyal and unwifely comparison, which may have been latent there for a long while. The superiority of Whittaker, in all his pursuits and aims, to Mark, stood forth in her thoughts, and for the first time there was forced upon her, with a dreadful pang, a confession to her own soul that her choice had been a mistake. How long had she fended off this feeling! Once recognized, her thoughts about her husband could never more be the same. Mark had meant to say a rude thing; he little dreamed how his own image in Roxy's heart had been dragged into the dirt and forever degraded by the train of thought his words had started. It was because of the great agony she suffered from the sharp contrast so unfavorable to the man she had chosen, that she sat silent. Mark was sure that his words were having an effect. Now was the time to achieve that mastery in his own house so necessary to re-establish his standing with his friends—with Barlow and Amanda and the rest. So he proceeded:

"You ought to know what people will say. They think that, because you were poor and then married a man wel off, that you are stuck-up. I don't like people to say that. And really, Roxy, you ought to be pretty well satisfied with

your position." Mark hardly intended this last sentence to have the condescending tone that he gave it. He did not mean to insult his wife, but to defend his own dignity. He would fain have recalled the words when he saw the first flash of quick and fiery indignation in Roxy's flushed face and eyes that shone like live coals.

"Mark Bonamy, do you think I thank you for giving me this house and making me the wife of a rich man? I took you because you were poor and a missionary, going to endure everything for a good cause. Your father meant to leave you poor." Here Roxy stopped to take breath. "I wish to goodness you were poor again, and the Mark you used to be, or the Mark I thought you. Isn't it bad enough that you have changed? Is there any reason why you should insult your wife with such words? I thank you for nothing! I thank you for nothing from this time forth!"

"Well," said Mark bitterly, "the truth is the truth. If you let your notions interfere, you show that you are not fitted for your station. It is time you learned that you are not a poor shoe-maker's girl any longer."

"I wish I was. From the bottom of my heart, Mark, I wish I was. If I could only go back to the dear old home, and be what I was! You have made me wish it this day, by the words you have said. You drive the love out of my heart entirely. If you say much more, you'll make me despise you!"

Roxy ran away to her room. She could not control her temper now; but she knew how severely she must do penance for it after awhile. For even in her passion she knew, in a blind way, that all this could do no good, and might do a great deal of harm. But her sensitive pride, so long wounded by the tacit assumption that she was

under obligation for the dignity of her social position, now uttered one vehement protest against all the torture it had endured since her marriage.

Mark rode away angry, and, as usual, with a very genuine sorrow for himself. For in the long-unused upper chambers of his soul there was still a sort of love for Roxy. Now he felt all the bitterness of sorely wounded vanity. He drank more deeply than usual before leaving the town, and he stopped at Sterling for another drink. He drove his horse on and on, over the rough limestone of the hollows, that he might give vent to his impatience. The deliciousness of the early autumn in these deep, shady glens, the muffled murmur of the brooks, already choked with the accumulated leaves and other débris of the summer, only irritated him, by making more evident to him the turbulency of anger and something akin to despair in his own heart.

He did not see the oncoming of a great storm until the thunder burst overhead. Then he would not so much as tie on his leggins. He relished the pelting of the dashing rain. It was a counter-irritant to the storm within. He rode past many farm-houses, but he would not stop.

It was characteristic of the impetuosity of the man that he should feel so keenly this terrible blow to his self-esteem. He was sure the fault must be Roxy's. All his friends admired and flattered him. She alone took it on her to rebuke him ; and, as hers was a voice solitary and unsupported, and above all disagreeable to his feelings, she was clearly wrong. And what a gross and wicked shame it was, that a well-natured and indulgent husband —such as he—should be stung by such insulting taunts, all because he did not want his prospects blighted by a perverse wife!

It had rained an hour and he was wet through when he came to Kirtley's cabin, standing low-browed and dripping in the rain like a brute that sullenly endures a storm from which it has no shelter. When he saw it a new train of thought seized him. In that cabin was a woman who loved him and who would go to the ends of the earth for him. There were plenty of women who would give the world for what Roxy spurned. The thought flattered and solaced him. He slackened pace a little, looked through the window at the blazing fire on the great hearth, asked himself whether he should not go in and dry himself by the fire. But a sudden vision of the possible results of such a course made him whip up his horse in desperation.

Ulysses stopped with wax, you will remember, the ears of his sailors while they were in hearing of the sirens, and caused himself to be fast bound to the mast, taking the same precaution against the seduction of temptation that our Farragut took against bombshells. But he who loosens in any degree the moral restraints of his life, unstops his ears and unbinds his limbs that he may fall easy prey to the "sirens sitting in the meads." And now as Mark plunged on through the deepening mud and the pouring rain he hearkened to the voice of the siren. The Homeric Greeks in their simplicity dreaded only sirens within earshot. But the modern man of more complex nature and gifted with a brooding imagination cannot run away so easily from the "mellifluous song" of seducing temptation. Half a mile beyond the Kirtley cabin was the ford. Rocky Fork had risen bankfull. There was no crossing except by swimming his horse. A daring fellow like Mark would not mind a spice of danger; he knew that he ought to go on at all hazards; but the siren's voice was in his ear. Self-pity had unbound all his resolution.

The flood in the creek afforded him a pretext. He rode back and took refuge for the next twenty-four hours in the house of Kirtley, while he waited for the creek to subside.

Now there was a certain foolish man that builded his house upon the sand. The rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house.

CHAPTER XL.

ROXY AND WHITTAKER.

Roxy was not one of those who nurse a sense of wrong and keep the judgment warped by anger. The life-long habit of looking her own soul in the face saved her from this. As soon as the first tempest of her wrath was over she began to hold a drum-head court-martial on herself. Here is the difference between the lapses of the person of high tone and those of a nature relaxed and weak. The test of moral character is not infallibility but recuperative power.

Roxy could plainly see that she had not been angry without cause. But then her anger had been chiefly about her own sufferings. She had forgotten Mark's good in her regard for her own dignity. So the court-martial voted her guilty. Thus while Mark rode away across hill and hollow, shifting all responsibility to his wife, Roxy scourged herself with severity all that long rainy day for her lack of self-control. And when the bitterest bitterness of her self-reproaches was spent, she awakened suddenly to a questioning of her method of reforming Mark. Was the uncompromising protest so much urged in that day the best? Had she not lost all hold on Mark? But by any other plan would she not "compromise her religion" and "deny her Master"? In this perplexity she saw no way out. And during the stormy night that followed, she prayed a hundred times for Mark, she vowed that she would suffer

any affliction herself if only he might be saved. If any sickness, sorrow or death inflicted on her would rescue him she would receive it patiently. But prayers are never answered as people expect them to be. The Over-ruler works in his own way. If Roxy could have seen by what way the future would give what she prayed for, would ever she have prayed this prayer? I cannot say she would not, for now all the enthusiasm of the girl Roxy who picked blackberries for the poor, of the religious Roxy who sought to save souls in revivals, of the saint Roxy who tended with soft hands the sick, of the missionary Roxy who wished to seek the lost in Texas, centered itself in the all-consuming desire to save Mark. Here was her mission-field henceforth. Why had she missed it so long? Out of that sleepless night she came with a fixed resolve, such as only an exalted nature can persist in.

She longed now to see Mark. She had put him out of the place of a husband on whom she had claim for reciprocal duty, into that of an object of missionary enthusiasm for whom she would endure anything. She would be patient, cheerful, uncomplaining. She was determined to find some way in heaven or earth of reaching him. But there returned to her the old dilemma. She must not "do evil that good might come," and would it not be doing evil for her to enter at all into Mark's worldliness?

She could not think of any one with whom to advise. Twonnet seemed such a child. The new Methodist minister was almost a stranger, and she could not confide to him, or to any class-leader or "mother in Israel," her troubles. But there was Whittaker. He already knew something about the Kirtley matter, whatever that might be. He was kind-hearted. He had loved her once and

he could help her. She thought of him as the one person to whose superior moral sense she could commit a matter of conscience; for Mark's words about him and the sudden painful contrast she had felt between him and her husband the day before had fixed him in her mind as the one most likely to see rightly in a question of duty. Whittaker was still accustomed to call at her father's, and she planned at first to meet him there, but her natural frankness made her hate indirection of any kind. She would not do right as though she were doing wrong. Not that she thought out or formulated such a resolution,—women do not generally do that; but she felt this out quickly.

The clouds had gone, the sun shone out over the yellowing fields of corn, and the vineyards hanging with purple grapes, while Roxy wandered about her house in doubt. The hired men were getting ready for the apple-gathering; the hired girl was busy in the kitchen, and Roxy, uneasy, sought the porch, the lawn, the lonesome parlor, and then her own room, trying first in one place and then in another to settle the puzzling questions that beset her, but never for a moment re-opening the question settled by the solemnest vow, to spend herself for the regeneration of Mark. This ceasing to beat aimlessly against circumstance,—this finding at last an object toward which to send the whole force of her nature, brought to her something like peace. For direct and concentrated action toward an unselfish aim was the condition of happiness to her temperament.

There were yet within her fountains of misery. Reproaches for her failure to see her way earlier, an undefined dread of irreparable evil from the quarrel of the day before, and doubt as to the best method of accomplishing her purpose, all troubled her. But it was some-

thing to know whither she meant to go. Obstacles almost exhilarate a brave soul; they are made for the joy there is in overcoming them. Then, too, the old resentment toward Mark—the feeling of pride sore-wounded by neglect—was almost cured. In her thoughts her husband was hardly any longer a person to be held accountable; he had become an object. For the intensely serious woman no less than the frivolous woman has this power of working romantic transformations by the action of feeling and imagination.

Twonnet came in the middle of the forenoon, fresh and blithe, and laughing and chaffing, and all out of tune with Roxy, who was as abstracted as a penitent in a cloister. Never a red-bird sang with more abandon than Twonnet talked that morning, bent on driving away Roxy's "blues." But at last she gave over.

"What is the matter, Roxy?"

Roxy's awe-stricken look had smitten the mercurial girl with a great horror of she knew not what, and sent the tears into her eyes.

"Tell me what is the matter?" and she leaned forward with one hand clenched, in a sudden anxiety.

Roxy stretched out her arms to her friend, but answered not a word. In a moment the two were in a silent embrace. Roxy did not weep, and Twonnet, oppressed with awe and mystery, did not dare to sob.

After a long while, Roxy said:

"Oh, Twonnet, I've been bad!"

"You've been bad!" and Twonnet disengaged herself and looked indignantly at her friend.

"I've been selfish, and angry, and cross to Mark, and I've sent him away angry, and I don't know what harm I've done."

"You! You've been good and patient, and I wonder at you sometimes."

"Twonnet, I am looking for some dreadful punishment. But I am going to be better. I don't know how. I want to see Mr. Whittaker. Nobody else can help me You must see about it."

And though Twonnet said all she could to cheer the other, Roxy was silent and fell back again into that state of solemn abstraction that seemed to Twonnet a hopeless desolation. Twonnet went home to see Whittaker and to arrange for the meeting between the two.

"I tell you what, Mr. Whittaker," she said, "I am sure there is some trouble in that family that will not be easily settled. Roxy has an awful look in her face. I don't believe they two can get on. Now, if you touch it, I'm afraid you'll be talked about and have trouble. Mark is doing badly and going with bad company. If he is very mad with Roxy, nobody knows what may be said about you."

Whittaker paced the floor in some agitation. Twonnet's words had come to have weight with him, and he was morbidly sensitive to reproach.

"If you think it would not be prudent," Twonnet proceeded, "I will just tell Roxy that I don't think it best, and get you out of it the best I can. Roxy is very reasonable."

After a while, Whittaker said:

"You wouldn't think much of a soldier, Twonnet, who would run away from danger. Now, a minister does not have to face bombshells, but slander. It is his business to take his risks, terrible as they are. Here's a woman in some grievous trouble who wants my advice. I'll give it if I am shot for it. I don't say anything about her being an old friend. Any man or woman who asks sympathy

or advice from a minister must be helped at all hazards, if the minister can help. The light-house keeper must not let his light go out because there's a storm. The question is whether I shall meet Roxy at her house, at her father's, or here. You know better than I do."

"Wat's dat you zay about bombshells?" broke in the old grandfather, in a red cap, sitting near at hand, catching a bit of autumn sunshine and hearing snatches of the talk between the minister and Twonnet. "It was vary coorious—je vous dis—I tell you—wat happeened to me, il y a long temps. It ees now feefty year ago." And he wandered off into a garrulous story of military adventure, at the close of which Twonnet had made up her mind that Roxy must come up with her that very afternoon and meet Whittaker in the Lefaures' house.

When at last they sat together in the parlor of the old long house, the Swiss clock ticking softly on the wall, Roxy had still her awe-stricken look, with a look of internal conflict superadded. For there is that in the cool reserve of a New Englander that damps the more demonstrative Westerner. Whittaker's silence oppressed Roxy. Twonnet had disappeared on some pretext, and the two were alone with only the solemn, regular, conscience-like old clock for third party and witness.

And as Roxy sat thus looking out at the grass and the shrivelling dog-fennel of the street, did she remember the time when once before she looked out of another window in embarrassment rather than face Mr. Whittaker? Whittaker remembered, and it was in part this memory and the feelings excited by it that gave him his air of reserve. Roxy looked out of the window a long while; then she bit her quivering lip and sighed, and then relapsed into looking out of the window.

"I'm afraid," she said, at last—and then she did not finish, for Mr. Whittaker sat there waiting for her to begin, and she thought it unkind that he should be so silent and open no way for her to speak.

"I am afraid I have done wrong to trouble you," she said, after a long time.

"My dear madam—my dear friend," said Whittaker, earnestly, "I only wish I could be of service to you."

When a self-contained man does speak with feeling his words have extraordinary force by contrast with the background of habitual reserve. Roxy's tears now ran down her face unchecked.

"I have been bad. You must not expect me to explain. I can't tell you all. I might excuse myself, but I will not, for I deserve to have you think me wicked. I have been selfish, angry, and harsh to my husband. I have done harm, though, indeed, I wanted to be good."

Whittaker did not check this strain of self-reproach. Penitence is God's own medicine.

"I am sorry for you. I needn't tell you that God is sorry for you also."

"I know that. The past is past. I am ashamed of it. God can forgive me; but, then, the harm I have done is done, and I can never undo it. But I cannot tell you any more about it."

"Don't tell me anything. You may be too severe with yourself, and you owe it to your husband to tell me as little as possible of your domestic life. At any rate, we cannot undo the past, and it will only embarrass you and me both for me to know what you shrink from disclosing. Tell me only what is necessary."

Is it wonderful or blameworthy that Roxy noted this

thoughtfulness, and wondered at the difference between Whittaker and Mark? But she said, eagerly:

"I want to bring my husband to a better state. He is not—bad—but then his company is not good, and he is not going—quite—*quite* as I wish he would. And I've been very hard and willful and angry in my efforts to bring him back. And I've done harm."

"And you want to undo it."

"Yes, and I want to undo all the harm, and bring Mark back to—to what he ought to be."

"Then take Christ's way."

"What's that? Do you mean to suffer for him? I am sure now that I see my sin, I would die for him."

Whittaker shook himself in a negativing way. When he had a practical difficulty to deal with, he instinctively shook off all theological ways of thinking, and all the phraseology of the schools, putting to work only the shrewd mother-wit that he had got from a long line of shrewd and hard-working New England ancestors. He helped a soul out of difficulty with the same practical judgment that his grandfather had used in sailing a whale-ship in a storm. So now when Roxy talked about dying for Mark, he gave himself a little twitch, as though he would dissipate all theories. With that gesture he shook off the student and the theologian, and brought out the shrewd Yankee below.

"I don't mean that, Mrs. Bonamy—Roxy. Did you ever notice that Christ was wise in a practical way,—was what you Western people call 'a good manager'?"

Roxy looked up suddenly, the old intelligent wonder coming back into her eyes.

"Christ got people to love him first. That is the first thing. He made the publicans love him by going to din-

ner with them; he made the woman that was a sinner love him. She loved much. When they loved him, he could save them."

Just here some theological and systemic doubts arose in the minister's mind, but he gave another impatient twitch, and the practical man kept the systematic theology in abeyance.

"Yes," said Roxy. "I saw the necessity for that this morning. Now there's my difficulty. If I try to regain my husband by that means, I must enter into his pursuits. They don't seem right to me. You know what Paul says about partaking in other men's sins. Would I be doing evil that good may come? Would I be compromising my religious principles?"

"I can see that you have been very wrong,—very wrong."

Roxy was a little hurt with this sharp rebuke.

Whittaker gave his theological self a good shaking, and then resumed:

"Now let us be practical. If your husband were down in a pit and you wanted to get him out, you would put a ladder down to him; you'd go down to help him, if he needed help. You wouldn't compromise the daylight by such an action. Unless you succeed in establishing a ground of sympathy between him and you, you can't help him. Put down a ladder. It don't do to philosophize too much about a practical matter. Use Scripture where Scripture applies, and common sense in matters that need common sense. God gave common sense, and it is divine also." Here Whittaker paused. He was astonished at his own words. The position he was taking was a new one, forced on him by the difficulties presented to him. Nor could he have applied these principles to scruples of his own.

"Don't do anything wrong," he went on, after a moment. "But when your husband loved you first, your feelings toward him were different from what they are now?"

"I admired him greatly." Roxy's eyes were downcast

"Surely there is much to admire now in Mr. Bonamy. His nature is not on so high a key as yours, perhaps, and you have judged him by your standard; you have been hard. Is it not so?"

Roxy bit her lip, but made no reply.

"You could praise your husband for a great many things. The world appreciates his gifts. Only at home he has been chilled by censure. I think he is a man who craves approval."

Roxy was now sobbing audibly and bitterly with her head between her hands.

"I should make the mistake I am warning you against if I didn't say—Roxy—my dear, good friend—that your mistaken severity comes from the nobleness of your character. Your errors are on that side."

Roxy, when she perceived that Whittaker had finished and was silent, picked up the sunbonnet she had worn and drew it down over her eyes so as to hide her tear-stained face. In her heart she thanked him, but her lips spoke not. She held out her hand and he took it. Then for the first time she saw that he had been weeping also. But he only said as he held her hand:

"'Ye that are strong ought also to bear the infirmities of the weak.'"

"Don't think badly of my husband," Roxy said with a woman's pride, as she paused on the threshold. "He is *real* good in a great many things."

"Don't forget to tell him so."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE ENEMY.

TRITE sayings are often trite because they are so very true. It is very trite and true also that many good plans have the fatal defect of being adopted too late. If Roxy had begun a year or a week sooner to prop Mark's house upon the sand with sympathetic kindness, it might have escaped its disastrous fate. But it might have fallen sooner or later in some way. Ruin is the only cure for ruin with some people; there is nothing but the recoil that comes of disgrace that will save a man of vanity and egotism. It is better that the ill-founded house should be utterly swept away, perhaps. Patching will not save it.

Roxy's kindness to Mark on his return, and her sincere endeavor to enter into sympathy with some of his aims and plans, only served to make him uncomfortable. Mark's guilty consciousness wanted an opiate—there is no lethe like self-pity; if Roxy had been severe with him he might have stilled his remorse with a Rip Van Winkle persuasion that his wife's austerity and not his own laxity drove him into sin. If he could have persuaded himself that he was an irresponsible waif, beaten upon and driven of domestic storms, he might have been tolerably comfortable. He would have been quits with Roxy. But now that she gave him appreciation of his gifts and praise of his generous qualities, his old love for her—the best passion of his life—revived and he felt a shame to have sinned against her.

Unconsciously he sometimes tried to provoke her to speak the angry words which would have been a relief to him. But though he could make her face flush with indignation, he could not draw from her lips a reproach. The power of Roxy's persistent resolution was dominant over her temper. She might cry her eyes out over his unkind words when he was gone. But her vow kept guard over her lips. And she found a certain peace in the struggle. She was born for hard tasks, and now as Bobo, grown but little taller in these years, went about the yard with a hundred chickens at his heels, he was sometimes surprised and delighted to meet Roxy with a momentary gleam of the old gladness in her face: it was when she thought she was really beginning to win back her husband to old states of feeling.

Poor Bobo, to whom Roxy's face was as the face of God, was so pleased to get a glimmer of sunshine from her that he would forthwith fill his pockets with chicken feed and give his followers an extra treat, scattering the food so that all should have some,—that all of them might be happy like himself. He had improved much in mind under Roxy's care. He repeated long strings of poetry with considerable appreciation of its meaning, and he could make himself useful in many things. But he could never be taught to give his bounty to dumb creatures otherwise than lavishly, and it was a most thriftless, lazy and unscratching set of chickens that he fed. The corn in the barn had to be kept out of his sight lest through his kindness the horses should be foundered, or the cows die of colic, or the pigs grow fat before the time of execution

Mark grew less and less remorseful as the weeks passed by He had, both from nature and training, a great power of forgetting unpleasant things—the most dangerous of

mental tendencies. A corrupt memory can defeat a tolerably vigorous conscience. But remorse does not generally come of successful and undetected sin. It was not David's guilt that brought forth David's repentance, but the detection of his sin and the disasters in which he was involved. As the autumn seared and browned and grayed at last into winter, Mark came to something of his old complacency. Forgetfulness filled the place of forgiveness; his prospects for political promotion improved, and, more than all, Roxy had come to see the error of her ways and was in active sympathy with his aims, only reserving the right to check and correct him in matters of detail. A man cannot be very guilty with whom all goes so prosperously.

It was only when one day old Gideon Kirtley came to town and held a private conversation with Mark that he was awakened from this forgetfulness of his crime. Evil done and out of mind has a way of starting up thus in a man's most peaceful and prosperous moments, as though Retribution were fond of making her entrance dramatical. To have a crime against law and society charged upon one just when the prize of ambition hangs low within reach is the realization of the doom of Tantalus. It was easy to quiet the old man for the present with money and fair promises, but Bonamy's security was fairly shaken out of him. Ashamed and terror-stricken in Roxy's presence, she found him sometimes moody and silent. He knew that Nancy would not be easily kept still, and that she would especially delight to torment Roxy. He must make a way of sending Nancy out of the country at all hazards, and he was not sure that any inducement would be sufficient to get her away. She was too fond of plaguing people to be willing to forego a particle of her revenge. Money was nc equivalent to her for the luxury of "getting even."

Mark knew that he must sooner or later have an ally in this desperate game of concealment. But who should it be? His brother-in-law, Barlow, was his chief political friend, and was very handy in fixing up bad cases. But then he could not bear to have Amanda by any chance know his secret. And, moreover, he distrusted Barlow. His brother-in-law was in business and politics a rival, and he did not feel sure that, between Barlow's rivalry with himself and Amanda's jealousy of Roxy, Ben might not think it best to push himself for Congress. At all events, he did not choose that Barlow should have so much leverage as the knowledge of his affair with the Kirtleys would give him.

But there was no time to debate. One night in December, as Mark was crossing the common toward his own house, he was confronted by Nancy herself. After a great deal of preliminary abuse, she came out with:

"Now, what you goin' to do about it?"

"Whatever you say. If you keep still and don't make a fuss, I'll do whatever you think I ought to do."

"W'y, you jest sell out and take me and slope, an' leave the Adams girl here. I haint a-goin' to be laughed at by all the fools on Rocky Fork; they haint no money, nor nothin 'll satisfy me but jest one thing. I'm goin' to git square with *her*."

Mark trembled at the fiery unreason of the creature. It was then a wild beast into whose power he had put himself. In his first dash of dismay he felt all the hopelessness of the case. Could one compromise with an infuriated tiger?

"What has she done, poor thing, that you want to break her heart?" he said, pointing on toward his own house, with a shudder.

"Her? What has she done? I had orto been thair

She stole you, and I am straight on the road now to git even. I always git even, I do. Break her heart, hey? Wouldn't I jest like to break it! That's what I'm goin' to do. You hadn't no business to leave me an' take her. I'm gittin' even weth her now. And you jest back out a inch from what I say, and then I'll git even weth you, too, or my name haint Kirtley!"

"Well, Nancy," said Bonamy, seeing how useless it was to enrage her with remonstrances, "you must give me time to see about things. I can't say what I ought to do."

"Oh, they's time enough, but they's only jest one thing to do. Me an' you's goin' to Texas this time, instid of her an' you. That's all they is of it. I swore I'd be even weth her, and it'll soon be square, one way or t'other. Ef you go weth me, it'll be all square with her, and I'll be satisfied. Ef you don't go weth me, I know more ways 'an one of gittin' square weth you, dog on you! The ole man says I kin make you pony han'some, anyhow; and then he says you wont be elected; an' then he says as he'll have you took up and sent to penitentiary; and, besides all that, I've on'y got to give the nod to Jim McGowan. Jim's a dead shot, an' he'll foller you all over creation weth that rifle o' his'n. But I haint got no gredge ag'in you, ef you do the fa'r thing. But I'm even weth her, any ways you kin fix it."

She shook her fist a moment in gesticulation, as she turned away and started toward the village. Mark heard her low whinny of exultation as he lost sight of her form in the darkness. He thought of the old tales of men who had bargained with the devil. Satan had come now to foreclose the bond, and it was too late to rue his engagement.

There is no magnanimity in conscience; it is prone to

take us at disadvantage. It always wields its whip of scorpions when the soul is scourged by outward circumstance. Mark found no cushion of self-pity, no couch of self-conceit, on which to rest that night. Half a dozen times he thought of confessing to Roxy. Her severity was terrible to him; he shrunk from putting his crime in the light of her conscience; but there were moments when it would have been a relief to hear her sharpest condemnation. Any outward chastisement would have numbed a little the inward remorse. On the other hand, he did not know what Roxy would do in case he told her. Would she die of shame and grief? Would she leave him? Would he ever be able to look her in the face again? There were but two roads open,—to throw himself on the pity of Roxy and take her counsel, or to seek advice of Lathers. The alternative was like one between God and devil.

But Roxy's very nobleness held him back. He knew that in her there was no weakness that could make her look with allowance on his sin. He could not lay it bare to her.

There is always a question when a man has fallen low whether or not he will rise again. It is a question of moral reaction. There is all the difference in the world between Herod, whose terror-stricken conscience plunges him ever deeper into crime, and David, who, out of the mire, climbs up the ladder of bitter contrition, and heartbreak, and shame, into the clean daylight once more. Mark's conscience smote him sore, but there was no fifty-first psalm in him. His vanity made him a coward. His habit of avoiding trouble made him evade the penance of a confession. After a sleepless night and a moody morning, which threw Roxy into the utmost consternation, he went to consult Lathers.

CHAPTER XLII.

COUNSEL, AND THE RESULT.

Even to Lathers, whose moral sense was not keen, Mark had much shame in confessing his trouble and seeing the "I told you so" look on the major's foxy face. But Bonamy was a little shocked at the unmoral view Lathers took of this question as of every other. Major Lathers could appreciate the embarrassment of a man who wished to avoid domestic jealousy and unpleasantness; he could understand the annoyance of an aspirant for Congress against whom an escapade of the sort might be used with over-pious and sanctimonious people, and he could understand the danger of legal difficulties, and above all the ugliness of the muzzle of Jim McGowan's rifle, but Bonamy's remorse was a riddle to him. And Mark was not made easy by the coolness with which Lathers "pooh-poohed" all that; in his present state of mind it reacted upon his awakened moral sense.

The sheriff was very willing to help Bonamy. It was convenient to have a "purchase," as he would have said, on the coming Congressman. He undertook to see the Kirtleys and by one device or another to keep them quiet. He winked his eye at Mark and said he knew how to be on both sides of a question. "He'd git the Kirtleys to make him their friend and he'd play that part on Rocky Fork." This dishonesty Bonamy was glad to have on his side, but the forebodings he had of failure made him wish that

he had courage to fall into the hands of the severe Roxy rather than of the lax Lathers. His future position, sheltered and delivered by Lathers's artifices and at the mercy of Lathers's fidelity, was a galling one to him. Lathers had a good many other devices for intimidating and conciliating the Kirtleys which he did not trust to Mark, and he saw also some possibilities of serving himself. As to the domestic difficulty, Bonamy had not asked his advice, but Lathers volunteered counsel. He knew something about managing wives. It was well to have "a purchase and the like." If you owe a man, it's a good thing to have a claim to offset with.

Here he paused a while and looked inquiringly at Mark.

"Now ef your wife's got a lien onto you, she's goin' to use it, an' that gives her the upper hand, and the like. And it's bad to have the ole woman have the upper hand, you see. It deranges things, you know."

Here another pause and a look at Mark that provoked him more that he dared to show. What right had Lathers or such as he to discuss Roxy? Who had given him this freedom? Here came again conscience, cruel and ever waiting its advantage. Who indeed, but Mark himself, had thus made his domestic life free to the trampling hoofs of Tom Lathers? Roxy was henceforth an element that Lathers, as Mark's private adviser, might weigh and consider. It made Bonamy grind his teeth with remorse and wounded pride that Roxy should be alluded to at all. But a new and dreadful vision opened to him. If he should lose the support of Lathers, Roxy's name might become common and conspicuous to every street loafer in Luzerne.

"Now," resumed Lathers, "I 'low you've got an offset."

"What do you mean?" asked Mark, trying to keep his voice down to a peaceful pitch.

Lathers was not in haste to reply He called Bonamy's attention to the fact that he lived nearly opposite to Lefaure's. Then he stopped. But Mark did not trust himself to ask a question, so that Lathers was forced to proceed on his own motion.

"Well, the day after you started to Republican meeting-house, last September, I see Mrs. Bonamy go in at Lefaure's."

"Well, what of that?" said Mark, with his teeth shut tight.

"Well, I see her shakin' hands with Whittaker when she come out the door. There wa'n't no one with him when he told her good-bye. That's a start for an offset."

Mark swore a savage oath and got to his feet.

"Lathers, you are a brute. You're a spy and a tattler! My wife's badly off married to me, God knows. But to have you say a word against *her* ——" and here Bonamy burst into another fit of swearing.

"Purty lively cussin', that, fer a missionary an' the like, Mark," sneered the major. "Ef I'd 'a' knowed you was on t'other side, sonny, I wouldn't 'a' la'nched out into this case. You can settle weth the Kirtleys yerself, liker'n not. I think I'll give it up. I don't like to be swore at that a-way. I haint accustomed to it, and my constitution's weakened by fever 'n' ager late years, so as I can't stand quite so much swearin' at as I could wunst."

"I am sorry, Major; I didn't mean to quarrel with you, but I lost my temper. Only don't let's say any more about my wife. This thing 'll kill her. You've got to help me out. I can't get on without you." Abject fear of exposure had made Mark a coward in the presence of the man into whose power he had put himself.

The major looked pityingly at Bonamy, who sat down again, as he might have looked on a simpleton. He accepted the apology, and during the rest of the interview he kept off the question of domestic management. However, he was nettled by Bonamy's outburst, and when the latter had gone, he said to himself:

"May be I'll take a notion to make him swear worse when I'm done. May be I'll learn him some manners. I've got the say about Congressman and the like, this time. Bonamy's too young. The law'll barely let him in. And I don't like to be called a brute, and a tattler, and the like, and a spy, though I do keep my eyes peeled as well as the next man. Nobody knows what information may turn out to be valooble. Mark 'll cuss; but he'll think about my words, and he'll take a turn, fer all his high tone. That high tone's all they is left of the missionary fever, I 'low. Though now, to be shore, the ole colonel was powerful high-toned on some sides, and powerful low-toned on others. Runs in the blood like, may be."

As for Bonamy, now that he felt relieved by the intervention of the shrewd Lathers in the affair, he became a little more easy in regard to the result. He even thought of himself with pity, as a man driven by evil circumstances. If Roxy hadn't have been cross, he might have got along.

But he also came to be more and more troubled, as the days went by, with what Lathers had said about Roxy. There was nothing strange about her going up to Lefaure's, though since her marriage the visiting had, by mutual consent, been done chiefly by Twonnet. What troubled Mark was that his wife had gone while he was away, and immediately after a very bitter quarrel between them. If what Lathers had told him were true, she had probably held a consultation with Whittaker alone. There

had been an unaccountable change in her manner toward him on his return. What mystery was there between Roxy and her former lover? In his heart Mark did not suspect her of wrong; but in his haunted and evil condition of mind everything seemed to wear a look inimical to him. He hated to think of Whittaker as in possible contrast with himself in Roxy's mind. Had Roxy taken to conferences with people about him? Sometimes he was vaguely afraid; sometimes vaguely jealous; sometimes heartily ashamed of both feelings. It resulted from this complexity and from his own remorseful restlessness and irritability, that he treated Roxy often with harshness, and again with the utmost deference. Sometimes she caught him watching her furtively, as though seeking to penetrate some mystery.

Puzzling herself day and night to guess out the cause of her husband's strange capriciousness, Roxy invented every possible hypothesis about the state of his affairs; but in none of them could she find a reason for the concealment from her of the cause of his trouble. If he had gambling debts, she thought, he might be secretive; but then he did not seem to lack money. His political prospects were good; and, had the case been otherwise, she felt sure, from what she knew of the quick reactions of Mark's mercurial temperament, that a chance for defeat would not disturb him so much. Sometimes the shadow of the dark Kirtley girl troubled her thoughts; but she had heard nothing of that affair since the day her father-in-law had twitted Mark with it, and it had receded into the background, as a thing unreal or insignificant.

At last something in Mark's manner led her to think that she might herself be the cause of his trouble. Clearly she was making no perceptible headway in the great pur-

pose to which she had given herself. There were signs that Mark's habits were not growing better, but worse. She determined at last to make a bold attack.

So one night, when Mark came home, he found her sit ting alone by the fire, waiting for him. She had everything arranged for his comfort, and Bonamy was angry, because he knew that she would be disappointed in her hope of winning him to cheerfulness. He had just heard from Lathers in regard to the progress of the Kirtley business; and, while Lathers had gained delay, he gave Mark little hope of anything but a respite. So the husband gloomily sat down in the rocking-chair set for him, and looked into the fire, answering the wife's questions moodily, saying he was worried, didn't want to talk business at home, and wished she wouldn't ask any more questions. This last was spoken somewhat tartly.

"But, Mark, we can't go on living this way. For two or three months you've been troubled about something. I've been waiting for your own time to tell me. Now, I can't stand it any longer. Wont you tell me now?"

There came a sudden impulse to Bonamy to seize this chance to begin the right course at all costs, by a frank confession. But the way of contrition—the hard road back out of this tangled and briery maze of wrong-doing—seemed so long and severe! All the weakness engendered by a life-long habit of self-indulgence and the evasion of unpleasant tasks came over him. He said to himself that he could not. It might kill her to hear it. What would be the good, anyhow?

The whole course of thinking was swift and momentary He only answered to her question, "No."

To prevent further questioning, he went to bed; and worn by excitement and exhausted from previous sleep

'essness, he fell into a sleep, from which he awoke at daylight to find that Roxy had not been in bed. When he had dressed and returned to the sitting-room, he found her sitting in her chair, where he had left her.

Something in the terrible resoluteness of his wife made Bonamy afraid. If she could spend the night waiting for him to awake and answer her query, what might she not do if she understood just how bad he had been? His sin did not seem to him quite so black after the physical refreshment of a night of sleep; and he easily persuaded himself that, for Roxy's own sake, it was necessary to conceal his guilt. Moreover, this solemn and awful determination of Roxy's to find out, had awakened his old combative stubbornness. He might yield and tell her; but it must be a spontaneous yielding. She must not carry the point by siege.

Nothing was said between them until after breakfast when Roxy again urged her plea so persistently that only Mark's capacity for blind resistance in a matter where his combativeness was excited, kept him back from telling her the whole story. This ugly state of resistance made him dwell now on his dislike of Roxy's private conference with Whittaker. At last he rose to go.

"Tell me one thing, Mark. Have I done anything that troubles you?" She said this as she stood between him and the door. Mark saw a way of present escape from her inquiries about his mental trouble, and present escape was the one thing that his indolent moral nature ever chose.

"Yes," he answered.

"Now you must tell me what it is. I don't want to do wrong."

"I don't want you to do things that make people talk about you."

Roxy looked at him in pain and perplexity.

"Did you go to see Whittaker last fall while I was gone?"

Roxy was very loth to say anything about this interview to Mark, so she answered evasively:

"I walked up with Twonnet and I saw Mr. Whittaker. Who told you about it?"

"That doesn't matter." And Mark was now full of suspicion of something inimical to himself in the interview between Roxy and Whittaker. Why should she evade in this way? Why ask in a startled voice, "Who told you?" He found himself in the position of accuser instead of accused, though with a lurking sense of his own hypocrisy.

"Did you go to Lefaure's to see Whittaker? Did you hold a private interview with him?"

"Mark, I am willing, since you ask it, to tell you all about that matter, though I would rather you hadn't known about it. But you mustn't ask in that tone. You know, Mark Bonamy,"—and here she straightened up while her eyes glowed,—"that I did not go there for any evil purpose. You must grant that or I will never answer your questions." It was the first time in months that Roxy's temper had broken forth, and now it was in power and resolute purpose that it came out and not in weakness.

Mark was seized with a sudden qualm of conscience. He looked in her pure face full of indignation and said:

"Of course, Roxy, I know you are all right. But what the mischief did you go for, just when you and I had fallen out?"

"I will tell you. I had been very cross to you. I felt sure I had done wrong. I went and asked Mr. Whittaker's advice." She spoke slowly and with precision.

"Asked advice of your old lover about your family affairs?"

"Have you noticed any improvement in my temper since? If you have it's all owing to his advice."

"Couldn't you be good-tempered without telling *him* that we had quarreled? Now I don't like you discussing me with anybody."

"I didn't say one word about you except to speak well of you, nor did he say anything except in praise of you."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him I had been bad and cross and unsympathetic and I was afraid I should do you harm."

"What good could come of confessing to him?"

"I had a point of conscience, if you must know; I thought that your pursuits were not so—so—exactly right, as they ought to be. I was afraid that if I did enter into sympathy with your worldly ambition I should compromise my religious principles. Mr. Whittaker removed my scruples and taught me better."

"I think you ought to ask advice of your husband." Mark's conscience smote him at this point. "I have heard your call at Lefaure's remarked on."

Roxy pressed her lips together and was silent.

"At least, Mark, you'll admit that I've changed for the better since I talked with Mr. Whittaker."

"I wish to God in heaven you'd changed a little sooner. It would have been better for both of us."

These words were spoken as though they were wrung out of him. Then to avoid further questions he left the house abruptly.

Roxy sat and cried and puzzled her wits more and more to guess what this last remark could mean. But when Mark came back he resented all inquiries and his wife waited out the long days and nights in inactivity and terror of she knew not what.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JIM'S RIFLE.

MAKING one's fortune in political life is gambling upon a series of ifs. If Henry Clay or some other Whig should be elected president, reasoned Lathers, and if there should be a Whig Congressman from the district, he would have great influence in distributing the patronage for Luzerne County. If the Congressman should be from one of the other counties in the district, and if Lathers could stand his chief friend in Luzerne County, the major felt sure that his political importance would be greatly increased. But if Bonamy should go to Congress Lathers would be second or third instead of first in his own county.

Lathers knew well that a scandal of the sort to which Bonamy was liable might not of itself be sufficient to defeat a candidate for Congress. The moral standard of voters away back in the Forties was lower than it is now in the Seventies, and there is even yet room for it to advance by the time we come to the Nineties. But if the Kirtley matter could be kept carefully suppressed until about the time of the session of the nominating caucus, he could then let loose Nancy's suit for seduction and turn the close contest against Mark by criminal proceedings and the scandal of an arrest. In the whole matter he would play the rôle of Mark's friend and defender, and in the confusion of defeat he would be able to stampede enough votes to Bonamy's chief competitor, Paddock of

Florence County, to nominate him. He had already made interest with Paddock. But the whole thing must be kept secret lest the Luzerne County men should have time to bring forward some other man and so defeat the plan. For the "geographical argument" was in favor of Luzerne County. It was the "turn" of the south-western portion of the district to name the man. And the geographical argument is a very weighty one if it happens to be on your side. If it is in favor of the other man you can insist that fitness is the only thing.

If Lathers could have been sure of Bonamy's election, he would not have proposed this desertion. But in such a contest as the one now raging over the nomination for Congress, the weaker candidates are prone to make common cause against the foremost one, so that by the time the convention meets to nominate, the bitter combined opposition renders his defeat certain. Mark, as the leading man, had to run this risk. Then, too, he was barely within legal age, and his youth was likely to be urged against him. And even if he should secure the nomination, the Kirtley scandal and the consequent domestic difficulties could not be kept secret until the election should be over, and it might defeat Bonamy by turning his own county against him. At the same time, Major Lathers kept his eyes open for anything that might turn up, and the like, and made all sorts of mental reservations in taking his resolution to go for Paddock. For himself, he said, he was like Jacob's coat of many colors—all things to all men that he might win the game, and the like.

In order to keep Mark's political strength up to its full measure for the present, Lathers kept Nancy quiet by holding out the most delusive hopes. He represented himself as her friend in the case. He told her that he had

extorted from Mark solemn promises to elope with her as soon as he could get his affairs arranged. Bonamy was even now selling off property secretly, so that he could start for Texas with Nancy in June. It is the evil of evil affairs that agents bad enough for bad business are too bad to be trustworthy.

Lathers had impressed on Nancy the necessity for secrecy. But there is a limit to the capacity for secrecy. Nancy could not long forego her love of tormenting Jim McGowan. Whenever the poor follow lifted his head in a faint hope of winning her regard, she pounced upon him as a cat does upon a shaken mouse that dares to move but feebly again. Seeing that Nancy had married nobody else, Jim reasoned that, since in the nature of things she must needs marry somebody, he would be the one. "She'll git done foolin' some day," he said. Having expressed himself to this effect to Nancy, as she sat frowning at him one day,—it was now the last of April,—she came out with:

"Thunder an' blazes, Jim! I'm a-goin' to do a heap sight better'n that."

"Where? How?" exclaimed Jim, startled.

"You'll know afore long. When you come to Texas some day, you'll find me in a fine house, *somebody.* I wont look at you then, dogged ef I will."

"W'y, Nance, how you talk! Sence Bonamy got married they haint no rich feller about that your'e like to git. You wouldn't run off weth another women's husband, I 'low," and Jim laughed a rude laugh at the improbability of the thing The laugh stung Nancy.

"Wouldn't I? Confound you, Jim, d'you think I'm a fool to be fooled with? I'll show girls how they kin take a beau from me, and I'll larn folks to fool weth me. You'll

know more'n you do now when you're a leetle older, may be."

This speech and the dare-devil tone set McGowan wild, as it was meant to. Puzzling himself to guess out what was behind the threat, there came into his mind a jealous suspicion of the true state of the case. He went to Luzerne the next day, and, by dint of pretending to know the facts, he wormed them out of Haz Kirtley. That very night, with the borderer's disregard for law and life, he loaded his rifle with a heavy charge of powder, cut his patching with extreme care, selected a bullet of good form and rammed it down solidly, smote the stock of the gun with his hand to bring the powder well down into the tube, and selected a good cap. He 'lowed that air would fetch things, he said.

With this well-loaded rifle he waited that night for Mark's late return to his home. He crept along in the shadows of the houses in Luzerne, intending to shoot Bonamy in the street. His horse was saddled and tied to the hitching-rail at the public square. There was not a light anywhere to be seen, except one from an upper window on the opposite side of the square. A conference with Lathers detained Mark very late. Even McGowan grew nervous with his long, murderous watch for his victim. At last he heard steps coming in the darkness under the locusts on the other side of the street. He leaned back close to the fence, slowly cocked his gun, and waited for Mark to come out of the shadow of the young foliage of the trees into the light, so that his unerring aim might bring him down. But when the figure emerged into the starlight, it proved to be that of a white-haired, well-dressed old man, walking uneasily and peering to the right and left. When the old man caught sight of McGowan

and his gun on the other side, he crossed the street to him, and said sternly:

"What's this? What are you standing here for at this time o' night with that rifle for?"

"You'd 'a' found out, may be, ef I hadn't 'a' seed jest in time that you wuzn't the man." Here McGowan slowly lowered the hammer of his rifle. "I'm after a man that's ruined my girl, and that's goin' off to Texas weth her. Leastwise, he means to; but I mean to send him somewheres else. Stand out of the way! I'm looking fer him every minute. And when I see him they'll be a case fer the coroner."

"Young man,"—the old man's voice was quivering,—"thirty years ago I killed a man right out there close to where the pump stands. He struck me with a whip, and I was young and proud. I shot him. O God! if I'd only thought what I was doing!"

"Is your name White?" asked McGowan with a shudder.

"Yes, everybody knows about me, I suppose. I am like Cain. That's my candle there in the window. I can't sleep in the dark. Sometimes I can't sleep at all. I can see Bob Anderson as I saw the poor fellow lying there thirty years ago. If you want to be in hell all the rest of your life, just shoot a man to-night."

This staggered Jim a little, but a moment later, swearing under his breath, he raised his gun to shoot. Mark, attracted by the sound of voices, was crossing the street to the two men. The old man pushed up the gun and kept on warning Jim.

"What's this?" asked Mark.

"It's me. Come to settle up with you about that matter of Nancy Kirtley. I'm goin' to blow your infernal brains out."

The old man kept putting himself in the way of Mc Gowan and urging Mark to run away. But Bonamy had always been a man of almost reckless physical courage, to flee was not possible to him, and now, tired and worn with the struggle of good and bad in himself, he had a desperate feeling that it would be a service to him if somebody would relieve him of his life.

" Take care, Mr. White," he said. " Get out of the way and let him shoot. I wish to God he would. Shoot, Jim, shoot. I deserve it. I would like to die right here, and get done with this whole infernal business and this infernal old world."

" You wont shoot an unresisting man," urged the old man. " You'll be a coward and a murderer if you do. You'll be worse than I am and you'll have more hell than I've got."

" I—I--" said Jim, letting his gun down and turning away, " I can't quite shoot a feller down in cold blood that acts that away. He's in my power." Then he stopped. " But just looky here, Mark Bonamy, you infernal scoundrel, you'd ort to die like a dog, an' you jest dare to run off with Nancy and I *will* kill you both, so help me God." And Jim proceeded to fire off all the curses which the Rocky Fork dialect could afford.

" I never had any notion of running off with her."

" You lie. She says you told Lathers so. I've got a mind to shoot you fer lyin' to me."

" I didn't lie. Shoot, if you want to. It would be a dreadful waste of powder though. I'm not worth the charge in your gun."

Irresolutely McGowan moved off, stopping now and then to look back while he felt of his gun ominously. At last he mounted his horse and slowly rode away.

"SHOOT! JIM, SHOOT!

"Don't say anything about this matter, Mr. White," said Mark as he saw the last of his enemy. "I'm 'most sorry he didn't shoot."

The old man moved off without reply, only saying to himself, "I sha'n't sleep a wink to-night."

It is commonly said that only a virtuous man is at peace with himself. In truth there are two ways to a quiet conscience, that of entire goodness and that of utter badness. As the first is never quite achieved, it is only the wholly bad man who has no trouble with the moralities. If peace of conscience were the main end of life, the dead conscience capable of telling no tales were best. The trouble with Bonamy, who now went home wretched enough, was that he was not bad enough. Many a man of fair outward seeming would have taken Mark's guilty consciousness easily. Bonamy's moral sense was not dominant, nor was it steady enough to be an available guide. Like all his impulses, it was subject to the law of his temperament and acted intensely but intermittently. But all the more for its very lack of continuity was it a tormentor when aroused by an outward circumstance, like Roxy's suffering face or an encounter such as this with McGowan.

Mark could face the muzzle of a rifle, but not exposure. And now the dread of disgrace and of Roxy's execration haunted him and made his wrong-doing seem blacker than ever. There came to him the desperate temptation to seek relief by the road to utter badness. Why not run off either with or without Nancy, and let the world of Luzerne drop away from his life? The illusive notion that he could begin life over again and do better seized him. But here again the contradictions of his nature held him back. He was neither bad enough nor good enough to take either way out

CHAPTER XLIV.

A BREAK.

EVENTS now took their inevitable course. Precautions of Mark and precautions of Lathers were alike in vain.

McGowan did not say much to Nancy about the rifle when he saw her early the next morning. But he told her that Bonamy had denied all intention of going to Texas with her. What could Nancy do but fly in a passion and suggest that Jim should mind his own business and be gone? He retorted with a sneer that nobody of any sense would believe an old fox like Lathers, who wanted to get Mark elected. Whereupon Nancy told him he was a fool and that he must clear out. But the suspicion once fastened in her mind that Major Lathers "might be a-foolin' weth her" set Nancy wild with anger. Gossips of Rocky Fork who had long hated Nancy for her beauty and her arrogance were even now whispering about her. She felt already the coming of the contempt she should have to suffer if her disgrace should become known. She would be shut out of good society.

So she started to town at once. She would see Lathers and Bonamy together and have things made right. Nothing was so dreadful a blow to her self-love as this suspicion that she had been duped.

When McGowan heard that she had started to Luzerne, his jealous and vindictive suspicions were roused again. He took his rifle once more off the wall-hooks and fol-

lowed, resolved to find out what this last move might mean, and to be prepared to square the account at any moment.

In the interview of the night before, Lathers had extorted from the reluctant Mark a certificate of his plenipotentiary authority in the Kirtley matter. This was to be shown to any of the family who could read it, and used as a means of keeping Nancy quiet. On the morning after the encounter with McGowan, Mark went early to see the major, telling him in despair that the matter was "as good as out." But the sheriff insisted that affairs were by no means desperate, and that, in sheer self-defense, Mark must proceed with his campaign as though nothing had happened. Bonamy had an appointment to go to Versailles for consultation over the political situation, and he must go. Lathers would 'tend to things and the like.

Roxy's look of mute appeal to Mark, as he departed that morning, disturbed him more than ever. She hardly ever said anything to him now. She had grown pale and wan waiting for him to speak of something—she knew not what. Of late she almost feared to hear this secret that weighed so upon him. Now he only glanced furtively at her rigid face, and then, turning abruptly away without looking at her again, he said:

"I don't know when I'll be back."

It was a rude parting. No other word of farewell. He did not even regard her as he brushed past her in the porch, giving some direction to the old negro, Bob, about the horse How could Roxy know that it was the very volcano of feeling within that made it impossible for Mark to say more, or to look in her face the second time? How could she understand that it was not deliberate neg

lect? She did not weep. Her heart was stone dead within her.

When Mark had gone, Bobo stood gazing wistfully at her face. He went up to her, ran his fingers up and down her cheeks coaxingly, and said, "Dear Roxy,—dear Roxy feels bad."

In an instant Roxy folded the child-like youth in her arms.

"*You* love me, poor boy, don't you?"

Then she smiled faintly on him as she relaxed her hold, and Bobo straightway fed the chickens all the wheat they could eat. But Roxy sat down, with her hands in her lap, and looked steadfastly out of the window at the great, black flocks of wild pigeons, flying by millions upon millions across the river, in swarms stretching for miles up and down the valley. Every year she had watched the mysterious flights to and fro of these birds, that darken the sky with their countless wings. Now she looked steadfastly at them, appearing as by magic out of the southern horizon over the Kentucky hills. The sight stirred again her memories of the dreams and plans of the girl Roxy, and she saw her own child-life pass before her, while she looked on as some one else. Then she remembered that it was May-day. The children would be going to Tardy's Thicket this morning. What armfuls of bright flowers she had gathered when she was a girl! She saw herself again, on the return, stopping on top of a grassy hill that overlooked the town. The vision of the merry song-plays, "Ring around the rosy," and "Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows," came up before her again. She saw herself chosen as "true love," now by this lad and then by that one, while she in turn made her choice, as they danced the old game again on the grass-green hill-top.

As it all floated before her, she did not feel sorrow, regret, anything. How can one feel when one's heart is stone dead?

Mark Bonamy rode out through the town and off over Lindley's Hill. He marked the children gathering in groups to start for Tardy's Thicket. A dim remembrance of the freshness of his own childhood swept over him, like a breeze that starts moist and fresh across an arid desert, but that immediately becomes dry and hot and parching. For what is May-day to him out of whose life all the freshness and innocence of childhood is clean gone? The bluebirds sang their softest love-songs on the top of the slanting stakes in the rail-fences by the road-side, boasting in their happy singing of the blue eggs in the round hole where they had built their nests. The cat-birds sang so as almost to rival their first cousins, the mocking-birds; the red bird's rich voice was heard on every hand. The wild pigeons flew over Mark's head in myriads, and when he was on a hill-top they almost touched him with their whirring wings. But all the joy of this day mocked a Bonamy. He was deaf and blind. The face of his wife pale, rigid, but beseeching, followed him. The dread of disgrace mingled with his remorse. For miles and miles he rode, over hills and through hollows clad in the new leaves of oak and hickory and maple, fringed with flowers of the dogwood and redbud and the thorny red haw; for miles he rode through flat lands covered with beech, past "branches," whose noisy waters refreshed the roots of sycamores; and for other miles he went through the Scotch settlement, along lanes bordered by blossoming elder-bushes with fence-corners in green and gold, of grass and dandelion, and in sight of sweet fields of dark-green wheat. But he saw nothing but the face of the heart

broken Roxy. He hated the green earth and the blue sky in his heart; he hated most of all himself.

At last, when full twenty miles from home, he stopped by the roadside; exhausted by the strain of emotion he dismounted, and sat upon a log, holding the bridle in his hand while the horse browsed on the grass and bushes. Why go on? What did he care for a consultation with small politicians at Versailles? What did it matter whether he should go to Congress or not? The misery in him had killed the ambition. How can hope and perdition dwell together?

The combativeness of his temperament had always inclined him to face physical peril, never to flee from it. A sudden impulse, like that of fierce physical courage, seized him now to ride back to Luzerne, to confess to Roxy, to resign all thought of election to Congress, to make the best settlement he could with Nancy, and then to take the consequences. The daring and desperate thought was like the suicidal reäction of a man who is driven frantic by danger,—he will kill himself to escape the dread of death.

He dropped the horse's bridle and walked to and fro across the road a few times. But deliberation had become impossible. He turned and seized the bridle again, sprang into the saddle and rode eagerly back over the road he had come.

At last the long lane had turned.

And ever as he spurred his horse up over hills and down into rocky glens he was inwardly smitten for his delay in turning.

Did he pray now that he was riding back toward something better? No. But he swore. He cursed himself, he cursed the crime that had blackened his life, he cursed

Nancy, he cursed Lathers, he cursed the world. He could have blasphemed the Almighty God himself. And yet for all his maledictions he was a better man even as he rode. For have ye not read how the devil, when he leaveth a man, casteth him down and rendeth him sore? And curses are often but the cry of the soul maddened by the scourge of conscience.

When it was yet mid-afternoon there were five more hilly miles for Bonamy to ride. Would he reach home in time to be the first to tell Roxy the evil story? The thought that she might hear it from some one else, and that so his confession might be forestalled, almost crazed him, and he swore and drove his tired horse on, up hill and down, until at last he came into the town with the horse foaming with sweat. It seemed to him that the people looked at him strangely. Then he remembered that his imagination was excited. But what were the people standing in the doors of stores and coming to the windows for? Why did they seem to recognize him in a surprised way? Perhaps, after all, they only wondered because his horse was dripping with sweat.

As he passed Lathers' office, that worthy chevalier, standing chewing meditatively in the door, started with surprise at sight of Bonamy and rushed out to him calling, "Mark, Mark!"

But Mark only swore and waved him off impatiently, riding straight onward toward the blossoming apple-trees and waving Lombardies of his own place.

And Lathers, whose discomfiture had been witnessed by the crowd on the street corner, went back to his office and shut the door muttering that the devil and the like was let loose all around to-day.

"Ef he wants to git shot that's his road," he added.

CHAPTER XLV.

COMING DARKNESS.

JIM McGOWAN had followed Nancy closely all the way to town. He kept so far behind that she did not see him, but at every hill-top he could see her. He watched her turn into the cabin of her brother Haz. Then he went to Dixon's corner and took a drink. After firing himself with yet other drinks he sallied out and on his way to a convenient post of observation he had the luck to meet Mother Tartrum looking about for a bit of news as eagerly as the early bird seeks a worm.

"Mr. McGowan, Mr. McGowan," shrieked the old lady, "what's the news? How do things get on out at Rocky Fork? Are you married yet?

"No," said Jim.

"That's curious. You brought me some wood two years ago and we talked about Mark Bonamy. He didn't go to Texas after all. He's tryin' to get to Congress. But they do say he aint very happy with his wife. I don't know what's the matter. I expect she's high tempered. These awful good people are generally highty-tighty at home."

"I'd be high tempered, too, ef I was Bonamy's wife. I'd choke him, blame him."

"Laws, now! You don't say. Do you think he's bad to her?"

"I wish I could get a good chance at him some time weth my rifle."

"Oh, my!" And with this Mother Tartrum fell to work with the eagerness of a gold miner who has "struck it rich," or a reporter who scents a "beat." Here was a lead worth the working, for Jim's whisky had made him communicative and he told Mother Tartrum all he knew. When she was sure she had all his information she dropped off like a satisfied leech. She was now eager to tell what she had heard, and above all to tell it where it would make the most sensation, so that she might also have the sensation to talk about. So she went straight to Roxy's aunt, Mrs. Hanks, only scattering morsels of intelligence at two places on her road, as I have seen travelers drop sparks of fire into dry prairie-grass, and pass on, sure that a wide-spread conflagration would go on long after they were out of sight of it.

While Mother Tartrum was marching to the pleasant task of humbling the pride of Mrs. Hanks, Nancy Kirtley, unconscious that she was watched by Jim McGowan, was moving directly on Major Lathers.

"You've been a-foolin' weth me!" she began. Lathers was very bland and persuasive in his replies; but he could not remove from Nancy's mind the awful suspicion that she had been duped. She'd heerd that Mark denied "teetotal" that he had made any promise of departure with her for Texas,—then the promised land of all absconding people. She shook her fist in Lathers's face. "You jest fool weth me onst, and you'll be sorry for it," she cried. As a last resort, Lathers read to her the paper that Mark had written the night before.

"Lemme see that air," said the girl.

"You can't read it," and Lathers drew back.

"I kin tell ef it's his'n. Ef you don't gin it to me now, I'll blow the whole thing all over town in an hour."

Lathers held it so she could see it.

"You're afraid to trust me take holt of it air you! Never mind; I come to town to git even."

"Oh, take it and look at it," he said.

With a jerk Nancy took it and shoved it into her pocket. In vain Lathers coaxed and threatened. She backed toward the door.

"I'll l'arn folks to fool weth Nance Kirtley, dogged ef I don't," and with a sudden spring she swung the door wide and passed into the open air. "Now, I'm agoin' to have this read, an' ef I find it aint Mark Bonamy's writin', or thet you're foolin' weth me anyways, then I'll take the other way of gittin' even. Where's Bonamy?"

"He's gone out of town this morning; and if you don't give back that paper I'll have you took up and the like."

Lathers spoke from the door of his office, and Nancy, fearing that the sheriff would carry out his threat, started off hurriedly, but with hesitation and indecision. First she walked one way, then another, as though conflicting inclinations perpetually broke her resolutions. Once she had admitted suspicion, suspicion easily pervaded a mind so turbid as hers. Bonamy was probably getting ready to go off without her. That was why he did not see her himself. She did not believe he was out of the town. It was all a ruse, and he would take his wife and run away from Nancy's persecutions. If that were so, she would better go to Roxy herself, and "have it out with her." She would "show them whether they'd play gum games on her." She would find out from Roxy what was the matter, and then she would know how to "git even" with them all. For her expanding and suspicious resentment now included Lathers also as one of the people in a conspiracy to thwart her.

LATHERS HELD IT SO SHE COULD SEE IT.

She didn't know, however, whether to follow this impulse to go to Roxy or not. But she was seized with a sudden return of the terror with which the elder Bonamy had inspired her. She had a vague notion that the sheriff was after her. He might put her in jail, and then Mark could go off before she could get out. She must strike her worst blow at once.

Impelled thus by fear and revenge, the prey to conflicting passions that found no check either from her understanding or her will, she hurried toward the Bonamy house, clutching the writing she had captured from the sheriff, who, for his part, was at his wits' end.

Nancy came to the large gate of the Bonamy place, and fell back a moment in awe. Like other people of vulgar minds, she had great reverence for the externals of life, and the long rows of trim poplars back of the gate overawed her rustic mind. To assail the mistress of such a place was appalling.

While she hesitated, Twonnet passed her and went in at the gate.

"I don't want to go in while that girl's thar," she said. So she went down the road a little way, and climbed over the fence into a vineyard. Crouching under the shelter of the vines, now pretty well in leaf, she could watch the house and be out of the way of Lathers or any of his men, if they should come to arrest her.

This arrangement, however, was a very exasperating one to McGowan, who had watched Nancy all the way from the sheriff's office. He was sure of some conference between her and Bonamy, under cover of the vineyard. So he began to look up and down the rows of vines, with his hand on the lock of his gun, searching for Mark with the same keen hunter's gaze that was trained in the search for

wild beasts, and looking for him with no more of scruple about killing him than he would have had about shooting a wolf.

Among those whom Mother Tartrum had spoken briefly of the scandal was Mr. Highbury. She had only told him vaguely that there was something awful about to come out about Mr. Bonamy's private character. She hadn't time to say more; but there would be trouble. She had seen a man from Rocky Fork waiting with a gun. And, having thus piqued Highbury's curiosity, she departed with that air of reserved information so satisfying to the gossip. It chanced that Mr. Highbury met Mr. Whittaker immediately after, and forthwith launched into a strain of moralizing over Mark's fall and the danger of these exciting revivals. The approved and pious way of gossiping is to sweeten scandal with the treacle of homilizing inferences.

Whittaker, from his previous knowledge of Nancy, guessed more of the fact than Highbury could tell him. He was grievously uneasy during Mr. Highbury's somewhat protracted moralities, and at last broke away rather abruptly. He was thinking of the thunderbolt hanging over the head of Roxy. Ought he not to do something to protect her? He could not go himself. Whom could he send? He thought of fat, inane, little Mrs. Highbury, and almost smiled at the idea of her consoling anybody. He could not send Mrs. Adams, the Miss Moore of other times. She was—well—not a fool; but she was what she was. Mrs. Hanks was Roxy's aunt; but he thought, from the little he knew of her, that she would not do.

But there was Twonnet,—giddy, nonsense-loving, railing Twonnet! With a glow he thought of her. What a

fountain of comfort that child had in her! He walked more briskly. He did not know how long this rumor had been afloat, and he might be too late to shield Roxy by the presence of her friend. He found Twonnet coming from the garden, carrying a wooden bowl full of freshly plucked lettuce, and singing gayly:

"Then buy a little toy,
A little toy—a little toy,
From poor Rose of Lucerne!
I've crossed the ocean blue,
From Swiss-land a stranger,
For a brother dear to me,
From Swiss-land a ranger,
Then buy a little toy," etc.

The air was lighter than vanity; the words were nothing; but the gay heart of the girl poured out in the childish song its own joyousness, with all the delicious abandon of a catbird's early morning melody. Seeing Whittaker, she colored slightly; but, quickly assuming an entreating air, she held out her bowl of lettuce as though offering wares for sale, turned her head of pretty brown curls on one side, and plaintively, even beseechingly, repeated the refrain:

"Oh! buy a little toy,
From poor Rose of Lucerne!"

There was so much dramatic expression in the action, so much of tenderness in the mercurial eyes and ruddy brown cheeks and soft pleading voice, so much of something in himself that drew him to "the child," as he called her, that he could hardly keep back the tears. For a moment he almost forgot his errand, but the sudden recollec

tion of Roxy's peril sent a counter-current of feeling through him. He put his hands upon the bowl which she held out to him, and said:

"Dear girl, don't. I want to speak to you."

The eagerness of his manner, and the unwonted tenderness of his speech, swept away the rollicking mood, and gave to Twonnet's face a flush and an air of solemn self-constraint, at strange variance with her previous playfulness.

"Dear Twonnet,"—the kindly form of address came from the complex feelings of the moment,—"some great calamity is about to happen to Roxy."

Twonnet breathed a sigh, and regained something of her composure.

"There are painful rumors about Mark. I can't explain it to you. There is no one else that can help her. You are the wisest woman in town. You are——" Here Mr. Whittaker checked himself. The returning flush in the face of the young woman reminded him that such flattering words were hardly what he wanted to say at that time. He recovered his customary reserve of manner, and added: "Go! Be quick. I'll explain to your mother."

"But what shall I say?"

"Nothing, unless you think best. God help the poor woman!"

Twonnet pulled down the sleeves of her dress, donned her sun-bonnet and hurried off. She was full of alarm for Roxy; but how many emotions can exist in the soul at once! In her heart of hearts there was a melody made by the words of commendation that Mr. Whittaker had uttered. He had spoken kindly, even tenderly. But as she drew near to Roxy's house, the undercurrent of

pleasurable excitement had vanished. The shadow of some great sorrow of Roxy's fell upon her.

When she went in, she found Roxy impassively looking out of the window. The millions upon millions of pigeons were still flying, and she was watching them in the same numb fashion as in the morning. She greeted Twonnet with a silent embrace. Then Twonnet sat down by her with no words. Roxy scanned Twonnet's face. Then she looked out at the pigeons again. They kept coming over the southern hills and flying so steadily to the north in such long and bewildering flocks of countless multitude. The very monotony of the apparition of new myriads when the other myriads had swiftly disappeared, suited Roxy's numb state. She had eaten no dinner. A deadly apprehension of disaster filled her thoughts, and she read a confirmation of her fear in Twonnet's face, and in her silence, but she did not ask anything. She kept on watching for the next great flock of swift-flying birds to come out of the horizon.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ROXY SHAKES THE DUST FROM HER FEET.

"MR. McGOWAN, what are you hunting for?"

It was the shrill voice of Mother Tartrum. She and Mrs. Hanks on their way to convey bad intelligence to Roxy had come suddenly on Jim who was still looking up and down the rows of the vineyard.

"Fer a crow," said Jim, a little disconcerted. Then he added in soliloquy, "Fer the blackest one I kin find."

"That man," said Mother Tartrum, "ought to be stopped. He's going to shoot Mr. Bonamy. I'm sure of it. He said to me this morning that he'd like to get a shot at him with his rifle."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Hanks, as they came to the gate. "How awful that would be!" But she could not help reflecting that in case of such an awful result Roxy would get her "thirds" of a very nice property.

Twonnet from the window saw Mother Tartrum and Mrs. Hanks come in at the gate. Roxy was still looking off vacantly at the sky and the pigeons.

"Mrs. Hanks is coming," said Twonnet, gently rousing Roxy by laying her hand on her arm. Roxy shuddered like one reviving from unconsciousness.

When the visitors knocked, Twonnet admitted them and stood by Roxy's chair when they had seated themselves There was a very awkward pause.

"Miss Lefaure," said Mrs. Hanks, "we should like to see Roxy alone."

But Roxy looked at Twonnet appealingly and took hold of her dress, much as a timid child might have done.

"I think Roxy wants me to stay here," said Twonnet. "We've stood by one another in every trouble, you know."

"As her aunt I suppose I am her next friend," said Mrs. Hanks, testily, "and I have a very confidential communication to make."

"Best friends aren't always born in one's family, Mrs. Hanks, especially when one happens to be born as Roxy was, poorer than her relations." Twonnet made this rasping speech from an instinctive wish to draw to herself the fire of Mrs. Hanks and so to shield the smitten Roxy from that lady's peculiar lecturing abilities.

Mrs. Hanks bridled with anger, but Mother Tartrum's voluble tongue caught the wind first. Turning her sharp gray eyes restlessly from side to side under her spectacles, she came out with a characteristic speech:

"Now Miss Lefaure, we've got something *very* important to say to Mrs. Bonamy—very important, and an awful secret, too. It refers to Mrs. Bonamy's *private* affairs—to her relations with her husband. And we don't choose to have you hear it It isn't fit for a young woman to hear. You just go in the other room, won't you?"

"Not till Roxy tells me to. I know what you are going to talk about. It isn't such an awful secret. It's talked about all over town, I suppose."

At this suggestion of publicity, Roxy shuddered again

"Oh, somebody's been telling it, have they? I suppose you hurried down here to tell it. People are such tattlers

nowadays. Even young people aint ashamed to talk about the worst things. Well, Mrs. Hanks, if they know, I suppose we might as well go." Mother Tartrum could not bear that everybody else in town should be talking of the scandal and she be out of the way. She felt that people were infringing her copyright.

Bobo had by this time come into the room and stood behind his mother's chair observing Roxy's face. He had before noticed that Roxy was not pleasantly affected by his mother's presence and he was possessed with the impulse to defend Roxy at all times. He came round in front of his mother's chair and said:

"You'd better be going, Aunt Henrietta."

Mrs. Hanks grew red with indignation, and Bobo drew back for fear of a box on the ears.

"Well, Roxy, if you'd listened to my advice you might have seen better days. But even now you wont talk to me about your affairs. And so your husband's disgraced you. Are you going to put up with it and stay? That's the question. You can get a divorce and get your share of the property. I came down to advise you because I have your interests at heart. But I do wish you'd consult more with me. And you might take pains to teach my own child not to be so impudent to me. He will call me aunt. Now I think we'd better go back, Mrs. Tartrum."

> "'Go back, go back,' he cried with grief,
> 'Across the stormy water.
> And I'll forgive your Highland chief,—
> My daughter, oh, my daughter!'"

muttered Bobo, who had committed endless strings of poetry and in whose mind an echo of memory was easily set agoing by the sound of a word.

"I must say, Roxy," said Mrs. Hanks, with asperity, "that I think troubles are sometimes judgments on people. Some women put up with things, but you wont, I'm sure, and if you should get a divorce you could get a good alimony, and——"

"No, no!" cried Roxy, getting to her feet. "What do you talk to me that way for?" Then she sat down again fiery but silent.

"Aunt Henrietta, you'd better go, *right off*."

"Bobo, you're too aggravating for anything," cried Mrs. Hanks. "To be insulted by my own child!"

But she took the advice and departed, while Bobo, whose brain was now seething with confused excitement, swung his arms in triumph and chuckled:

> "They're gone over bank, bush and scaur,
> 'They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar."

"Twonnet," said Roxy, "what *is* this thing that is so dreadful? Everybody says it is awful and nobody will tell me what it is."

"I don't know, Roxy. I am like the man in the Bible that ran without a message. I heard that there was some scandal about Mark, and I came right off to you. Mr. Whittaker told me to come. I didn't hear what it was But I'm glad you didn't hear it from them."

"Has ——" But Roxy hesitated.

"What is it, dear?" asked Twonnet, tenderly.

"Has Mark gone away for good?"

"I don't know. I didn't know that he had gone at all."

Roxy leaned her head upon the window sill and lay

thus a long time. Twonnet looked out of the window She saw a figure moving among the vines. Then Nancy Kirtley came stealthily out into the walk and approached the house. Twonnet looked at her for a minute. Then she said:

"Roxy, I do believe there is that same Kirtley girl that we saw a long time ago—the night Haz's baby died."

"Oh, Twonnet!" said Roxy, catching hold of her friend. "She's the one that all this is about. I know now. How *can* I see her? I can't! I hate her!" And she buried her head in her hands.

"You mustn't see her," said Twonnet, shuddering.

"Yes, I must, if it kills me. I must know the worst of it. Bring her in here. Bobo, go out."

Nancy was in a hurry. Dimly through the rows of vines she had caught sight of Jim McGowan searching every avenue for Mark. She had not recognized him, but was sure that this man with a gun was some emissary of Lathers, bent on arresting her, or of recapturing from her the precious paper with which she hoped to drive Roxy away from her husband. There was, therefore, no time to be lost. She entered without a sign of recognition, and sat herself down boldly—almost fiercely—in front of Roxy. But there was something so awful in the rigid face of this woman, who drew back from her as from a hateful and polluted thing, that Nancy found it hard to begin. She began to feel a stinging sense of her disgrace. She had no circumlocutions at command. Her story was soon told. To the pure and sensitive Roxy it seemed so hideously repulsive, so horrible in the black consequences that it must bring, that—woman-like—she refused to believe it, or, rather, she refused to admit that she believed it, in spite of all the evidence that her own

knowledge of Mark's recent behavior furnished in confirmation.

"I don't believe a word you say," she said to Nancy.

"You don't, hey? I knowed you was stuck-up. You stole him from me, and I swore I'd be even. I 'low I'm gittin purty nigh even about this time. Looky heer, heer's a watch-seal that Mark Bonamy gin me when he was a-runnin' fer the legislater in eighteen and forty. That's four year ago, soon after the night he danced all night with me, and gin all the rest the go-by. You don't believe that's his'n? Well, whose Testament's this? He gimme that at Canaan. That come when he was a preacher. You're a town gal, and you kin read the writin' in that Testament. You see he loved me right along. I'll leave it to you, yourself, which a man would be likely to love most, you or me, now?" And she pushed back her sun-bonnet and showed her beautiful face, fascinating as a leopard's.

Roxy drew away from her with loathing.

"You hateful creature!" she said. "You aren't telling the truth." But she knew that Nancy's story was true.

"Oh yes! you don't like me. I don't wonder at that. I'm goin' to git even weth Mark, I am. Him an' Major Lathers has been a-lettin' on he was agoin' off weth me to Texas. I'll show 'em! Look at that paper, won't you?" Here she handed the paper to Roxy, who saw these words, in a handwriting she could not mistake:

"Whatever arrangement Major Lathers makes with Nancy Kirtley I will carry out.

"Mark Bonamy."

"That was got up to fool me," proceeded Nancy, by way of exposition. "Now, Mark Bonamy can do as he

pleases. He kin go off weth me, or I'll have him tuck up. An' you'll larn, sis, whether it's safe to fool weth Nance Kirtley's beaus or not. I'll git even weth the whole kit and tuck of you, by thunder! It's a way the Kirtleys has, you know." And her eyes beamed with a ferocious exultation, as she saw a look of hopeless pain overspread the face of her victim.

Then Nancy gathered up from the floor, where Roxy had partly dropped and partly thrown them, her Testament and her watch-seal and the paper taken from Lathers, and departed, keeping a good look-out for sheriffs who might want to take her up.

"Twonnet," said Roxy, when Nancy had gone, "let's get out of this house. It smothers me. I shall die if I stay here. I hate everything here. It seems like a kind of hell!"

She got up and went to her own room. She changed her gown for one that she had worn before her marriage. She gathered up the few little treasures she had yet from her girlhood, and put away everything that had been bought with Mark's money. Then she took her bundle and started out the door. The hired girl came after her to the piazza in amazement, and asked if she would be home to supper. But she shook her head in silence and went on, followed by Bobo and Twonnet.

Her father, who had heard the scandal by this time met her in the road, not far from the gate. She reached out her hand and took his with a little sob, and the stern old shoe-maker ground his teeth, but said nothing. Hand in hand walked the father and the daughter, followed by Bobo and Twonnet, till they entered the old log-house, with its familiar long clock and high mantel-piece and wide fire-place. Mrs. Rachel Adams and Jemima met

her with tears; only Roxy neither cried nor spoke. In her own upper room she set down her bundle with a sigh, and then, exhausted, lay down again on her own bed, and lay there, with Twonnet by her, until the day died into dusk and the dusky twilight darkened into night.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Martha Ann, the hired girl, was so stunned by the manner of Mrs. Bonamy's departure, that she went to the nearest neighbor's to reconnoiter. Hearing the wildest reports of the scandal, she made up her mind solemnly and conclusively that it wa'n't no kind of a house fer a respectable and decent young woman to stay in. So she went into the field and unburdened herself to the old negro, Bob, who had been with the Bonamys as slave, and then as hireling, all his life. Bob, with true negro non-committalism, didn't know nothin' 'bout dat ah. Fer his paht, he was agoin' to put dem 'arly taters in de groun' ef white folks fell out wid one anudder or ef dey fell in ag'in. 'Peared like as if white folks was allus a-habin a spiteful time. Didn't reckon 'twould hu't his cha'acter to stay awhile in de ole house. Anyways he was a-gwine to stick dese h'yer 'arly taters into de groun'.

But Martha Ann left. She did not go home that night, but stopped with a second cousin in the village, so that she might have the pleasure of being consulted by the gossips as a high authority on the internal infelicity of the Bonamy household. And she sincerely tried to recall something worth telling, giving her memory a serious strain in the effort.

It was while the town was in this white heat of excited curiosity, that Mark Bonamy rode his dripping horse

through the streets. Lathers had hailed him, with the purpose of warning him against McGowan's rifle. He spurned the sheriff as he would have spurned an emissary of the devil.

He rode into his own gate with dread. Martha Ann had not felt obliged to close the doors, so that the place had the air of being inhabited yet. He threw the bridle-reins over the hitching-post in front of the house, and alighted. He went across the porch, into the hall, through the sitting-room, into the parlor. The horrible foreboding that he was too late to make the confession he should have made before, gradually deepened now into certainty. He hurried upstairs, hoping that Roxy might be there. There was Roxy's apparel, as she had left it. He opened the drawers—there were all the things he had ever given her. Her dresses hung in the old-fashioned clothes-press. He did not doubt that she had gone. But she had gone —Roxy like—not meanly, but proudly.

Then, for the first time, he felt what a woman she was. How had he failed in his pride of birth and conceit of smartness, to understand her superiority! He had looked with condescension on a woman who was utterly above him. Here was to be no suit for alimony—not an unnecessary shoe-latchet of his would she carry away. These things strewn about the room said plainly that, having loved her husband and not his possessions, she utterly rejected what was his when she cast him off.

Mark cursed his own folly and wickedness. In that hour of desertion and loneliness, he loved Roxy as he had never loved her before. How would he have died to have undone all this evil! He went to the kitchen to find Martha Ann; but she also had gone. He made no doubt Bob had deserted, too. He was a leper, forsaken by his household.

Returning to the sitting-room, he sat down where Roxy had sat before; he rested his head on the table until night came on. Darkness, Solitude, and Remorse are a grim and hateful company.

Bob had come near the house once or twice; but, seeing no one, he had gone to "do his choores." At last, when it was fairly dark, he concluded that, as the master had not come back, he would better shut up the doors. So he went stumbling about the house, looking for a candle. Supposing himself alone in the deserted place, it seemed a little frightful to his superstitious mind, and he cheered himself with soliloquy and the childish humor of his race.

"Bob, it peahs like as ef ev'ybody's clean cl'ar'd out and done lef' dis yeah place to you. Hyah! hyah! Yo' house, yo' barn, yo' hosses. Sho, Bob, you's a-gittin' too rich fo' a niggah. Dribe roun' in yo' own ca'idge, now, and keep anudder niggah. Be a lawyeh, I reckon, an' 'scuss things afo' de jedge. Run fo' Cong'ess nex'. 'Taint ev'y day a ole niggah drops down into a han'some house an'—— Good goramity! Oh! My Lor'! Who's dis heah?"

Bob had run against Mark, who sat still by the table. The old negro soon appreciated the position of things, was profuse in his apologies, declared that what he was saying he didn't mean, was on'y jes' a-foolin', ye know, sah.

"Bob," said Mark, "what time did Mrs. Bonamy go away?"

"Don' sahtainly know, sah. A pooty good while ago, sah. Done been gone a right smart while, sah. May be a little longer'n dat, sah. Can't tell, ye know I was out a-plantin' 'arly taters an——"

"Did Martha Ann go with her?"

"No, sah, not zactly wid her, sah. She come out to me wid a whole lot o' nonsense about goin' off, an' about her cha'acter. An' I tole her, says I ——"

"Who's been here to-day?"

"I don't know, sah. I see sev'al, may be mo'n sev'al, ladies a-comin' in. Mis Hanks an' ole Mis Tahtrum, an' a gal in a sunbonnet I see agoin' out, and Mis Twonnet war heah nigh onto de whole day, an'—laws, now, dah's dat hoss you rid a-nickerin' out dah. Never mind, honey, I'll come and put ye in de stable direckly."

And the old man, after fumbling around awhile, lit the solar lamp on the table. Then he started to take care of the horse, but seemed to think he'd forgotten something. He came back to the door, and said:

"'Peahs like's ef you was a-havin' hard trials and much trebbelations lately. Lean on de Lord, Massa Mark, and he will restrain ye, though de floods overflow ye, an' the waters slosh over yo' head, an' ——"

"There, that'll do. Go on, Bob," said Mark.

The old man, after stabling the horse, returned to the house and got some kind of a supper for Mark, which he put upon a tray and set on the table in front of him. Then he retired, leaving Mark again in the society of the black sisters—Night, Loneliness, and Remorse. He left the supper untouched. He wandered about the grounds and the house. The one uppermost thought in his mind was suicide. It was quite characteristic of him that his remorse should take this intense form. Roxy's character seemed to him so noble, and his own so full of paltry meanness and large wickedness, that, for very shame, and as the only adequate expression of his repentance and affection for her whom he had wronged, he thought he

ought to snuff out a life that seemed to have no goodness in its past, and no promise in its future. He had, in times past, forgotten and broken all good resolutions. He dared not trust himself to do better in the future. But, in fact, Bonamy was in a better state than ever before. For the first time in his life, he dragged his whole character to the bar of judgment. In all his religious experiences, no conviction had ever probed the weakness of his nature to the bottom. The Mark Bonamy looking suicide in the face, was better than the religionist, Bonamy, with his surface enthusiasm. When Iscariot killed himself, it was because for the first time he knew himself, and realized that the world had no use or place for such as he. There was more hope for him then, had he only known it, than when he sat complacently at the feet of the Master.

It seemed to Mark that only by ending his life could he adequately atone for his fault. The fear of the perdition of popular belief did not deter him. Penal suffering would have been a relief to his conscience. If he could have burned out the remorse, he would have taken any amount of burning. He began gradually to resolve on and then to plan for suicide. Roxy should know at the last that he was not wholly mean, and that in spite of all his evil, he loved her. He would arrange his affairs, bequeath his estate to Roxy, except a sum for the care of Nancy's child, when it should be born. Roxy might reject the estate, if she chose; but, having done what he could to repair his fault, he would flee out of life.

But, even with this decision, the ignoble side of his nature had more to do than he supposed. It is easier for a man who dreads suffering, and mortification and complex difficulties, and the slow agony of moral convales-

cence, to escape from life, than to fight one's way to such goodness as lies in reach, and then to live with the consciousness that it is but a half-way goodness after all, very uncertain and untrustworthy, liable to fall down easily and subject one to new mortifications and a Sisyphian toil.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE TEMPTER.

Haz Kirtley, the drayman, lived in that part of the town situated on the lower bank next the water. Since the great freshet of 1832, when the Ohio had swept clean over this lower level, it had been abandoned by most of the inhabitants of the well-to-do class. And now the village cows grazed over green commons, where before had been rose gardens and grape arbors. Some of the houses had been removed, but some which were damaged by the water were allowed to remain in a ruined state, tenanted by the families of fishermen and other such folk, and by rats. This part of the village was called Slabtown in familiar speech, and here lived the Kirtleys in a house but one room of which had been finished, when the freshet came and drove the owner to a secure refuge on the high terrace. Hither came Nancy in a state of vengeful exultation after she had stabbed Roxy Bonamy by the evidences which she was able to produce of Mark's infidelity.

Notwithstanding Nancy availed herself of the shelter of her brother's house without hesitation, a state of cat-and-dog discord had long subsisted between her and the drayman's wife. Mrs. Hezekiah Kirtley was a tall, raw-boned woman such as the poor-whitey class produces in abundance. She was not fair of countenance. Haz did not marry her for comeliness of face or figure. In fact, Haz could hardly be said to have married her at all; on

the contrary she married him. Her charms were resistible, but her persevering determination was not.

Nancy had long enjoyed setting off her own magnificent figure, large, lustrous black eyes, glossy eyebrows, abundant hair, symmetrical features, red, sensuous lips, white teeth and ruddy healthful cheeks, with the hatchet face and hard, repellant eyes of her lank sister-in-law. She could not forbear trying to make her sister-in-law appreciate the contrast. The consequence was a perpetual irritation between them, sure to end in an open quarrel pretty soon after every coming together.

Now that Nancy was disgraced, it could not be expected that Mrs. Haz would be magnanimous. She had been humiliated so long that her present opportunity was golden. She began with innuendoes and ended with downright abuse. Nancy sat on the hearth glowering and growling savage retorts like a fierce beast driven to bay at last, sullen but not despairing. She felt more hopeful when Haz came home to supper with the news of Mrs. Bonamy's desertion of her home and of Bonamy's return. But Haz's wife grew steadily more violent, her words fanned her passion; she called Nancy vile names; taunted her with her folly and the inevitable disappointment and disgrace in store for her, and set the savage creature wild with impotent wrath. The girl refused to go to bed on the straw pallet in the unfinished loft, but sat staring sulkily at the tallow candle. And the hope of success in her schemes sank down within her like the flame of the expiring candle, flickering in its socket. At length, as midnight came on, when the exhausted Mrs. Haz had been sleeping soundly for an hour or two, Nancy rose up from her chair and started out in the darkness, taking her way through the town and toward the Bonamy place.

Bonamy had wandered about wildly all the early part of the night and had then sat down in the lighted sitting-room, exhausted with the strain of emotion and the fatigue of the day. He was a condemned prisoner. There was no road out of his perplexity but by death. In vain he had beaten against the bars on every side. There was nothing else for him. After awhile he heard the sound of feet coming up the steps and across the porch and through the hall, and Nancy Kirtley came unceremoniously to the door of the room where he sat. She was not quite the old Nancy. The air of vanity and coquetry was gone. The face, if anything, was more striking than before. Her present passion was a bad one, but it was a serious one. There was an unwonted fire in her eyes, and though it was a fire of desperation, it was at least a sign of some sort of awakening.

"Mark Bonamy, you and Lathers has been a-foolin' weth me," she said defiantly. "All the blame fools is a-laughin' at me now, and callin' me bad names. I haint agoin' to be fooled weth. I come to see whether you'd do the fa'r thing by me."

"What is fair?" said Mark.

"Why, go away weth me, like Major Lathers promised. Your ole woman's gone, and she wont never come back, I 'low. She'll git a divorce. Now, what air you goin' to do fer me?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? You don't know? They haint on'y jest one thing fer you er me. Let's light out of this ere country. You can't stay here. Roxy Adams has left you. Now why can't you take keer of me and my baby? You know it's yourn, too. What'm I to do? At Rocky Fork they'll all laugh at me—hang 'em! Haw's wife, she's jest

about kicked me out. And now you're goin' to throw me overboard. And to-morry I wont have no friend to my name. Everybody'll hate me and sass me. An' I jest wont stan' it—I can't stan' it no longer!" And Nance sat down and cried.

Mark's quick feeling was touched. He knew that Nancy herself had plotted this ruin; but her grief at its unforeseen results was real. He had made up his mind to suicide. Here was a sort of suicide in life that he might commit. He was nothing now to Roxy. Why not deliver this other woman from the shame he had helped to bring upon her. And then, there was the unborn child; it would also have a claim upon him. There was Texas, a wild land in that day, a refuge of bankrupts and fugitive criminals. Among these people he might come to be a sort of a leader, and make some sort of a future for himself. This Nance was a lawless creature—a splendid savage, full of ferocity. Something of the sentiment of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" was in him. He would commit moral suicide instead of physical,—release the animal part of his nature from allegiance to what was better; and, since he had failed in civilized life, he might try his desperate luck as a savage. It was easier to sink the present Bonamy in the wild elements of the South-western frontier, than to blow out his brains or drown himself.

Moved by the tears of Nancy and by such thoughts as these, he got to his feet, with an impulse to canvass the matter with Nancy. Then everything about him reminded him of Roxy. It was all as the brave, heart-broken woman had left it. After all, she was the real victim. Should he add another to her injuries? The recollection of his first pure love for the enthusiastic girl came back with a rush. It were better to die than to yield again to

the seductions of Nancy, even when a sort of false duty seemed to be on that side. He remembered how like a fierce savage Nance had made war on Roxy, and with what terrible result. With one of those quick revulsions to which impulsive natures are subject, he felt all the tide of bitter remorse that he had suffered in the day coming back.

"Nancy, look here!" He confronted her as he spoke. "You set yourself to ruin Roxy. You said you wanted to break her heart. You know you did. She never did you any harm. She never did anybody any harm. She's one of God's angels, and you're the Devil's devil. So am I. God knows I'm not fit for Roxy. But I wont do her any more harm. I wish to the Lord I'd died before I ever did this. Now, Nancy, I'll provide for you and the child. I'll send you away somewhere, if you want to go. But I swear now, by the Almighty God in Heaven, that I never will go a step with you! I am sorry for you, and I'll do whatever you want as to money; but the devil himself sha'n't make me go off with you. If you want any help, send me word; but I don't want to see you any more."

"I'll have you took up," said Nance, fiercely.

"I don't care. I ought to be in jail."

"I'll have you shot. Blamed ef I wont!"

"You'll have to be quick. I mean to kill myself as soon as I get things fixed up. If your father or brother or Jim McGowan get the first shot, it'll save trouble."

Saying so, Mark walked away upstairs, leaving Nancy to get out as she could. And, indeed, she stood a long time on the porch. She was foiled, and all her venom turned back on herself. She could not go back to Rocky Fork. The world had turned to perdition. The vain, arrogant creature was the butt of everybody now—a de

spised castaway, whose very beauty was a shame. Even Mark Bonamy called her a devil. She had looked in contempt on all the women of her world; there was not a woman now, in all her world, that did not utterly despise her. Nothing in all this social universe is so utterly thrown away and trodden under foot as a dishonored woman. And even the unthinking Nancy felt this as she walked in the moonlight along the river-bank all the way back toward her brother's house, which the cowed creature dared not enter again that night.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE HELPER.

WHO shall take account of the difference in the individual manifestations of the human conscience? There sits Nancy Kirtley on the bank of the broad river, while the white light of the declining moon is on its waters, and the dim Kentucky hills are sinking into a darkness that will soon swallow them entirely. If you could examine her consciousness you would hardly find a sense of wrong-doing. There is a brute sense of defeat, and, perhaps, a feeling that she has blundered, and that some other course might have been better. There is something which a sanguine evolutionist might hope would develop into a conscience, by some chance, in many generations. But what eons will it require to transform this feeling that somebody or some fate unseen has wronged her, into a moral judgment capable of distinguishing and respecting the rights of others?

In this same moonlight night, Whittaker, who has wrought none of this wrong, is troubled by it so that he cannot sleep. The scrupulous man must ever suffer vicariously. The sins of others are laid upon him; he is wounded for their iniquities. Such extremes are there within this human race of ours!

Whittaker was profoundly moved that night by haunting thoughts of Roxy in her anguish. He could not go to offer sympathy, but he comforted himself with think

ing of Twonnet keeping watch over the forlorn woman. Then he remembered with more indignation than pity the guilty man, Bonamy. From general rumor Whittaker had heard of Mark's return to the deserted house. Spite of his indignation, the minister was moved a little when he thought of him with no companionship but that of Night, and Loneliness, and Remorse. Ought not he, a servant of The Servant, to seek out this abandoned leper and help him in the hour of his darkness to find his way back into regions of light, of cleanness, and of human fellowship?

Whittaker was shy and timid—the bravest men are. He shrank from intruding into the troubles of others—the most sympathetic people do. But on this night he was tormented about an affair that any other man in Luzerne would have said was none of his. Such are the gross inequalities of conscience. Aaron Burr reads cheerfully in his bath with a fresh murder on his hands; a sensitive man lies awake because of some opportunity neglected of helping one who has himself chiefly to blame for his own troubles. Behold the premium one must pay for elevation of character!

An hour after midnight Whittaker got up and looked out on the moonlight making visible, in a sweet and dreamy way, the chief features of the landscape. It was hardly a view, but a sort of a monochromatic picture. The moonlit scene bore the same relation to the familiar daylight view of the landscape that reverie does to plain and open thought.

Without any very definite purpose, Whittaker dressed himself and went out. The broad river was as smooth as glass; there was a sky below in symmetric correspondence to that above. Still without a clear notion of what he

should do, or could do, the minister took the way toward Bonamy's, walking meditatively here and there under a locust in full and fragrant flower; even the grass-grown sidewalk was strewn with fallen petals. But as he neared the smitten house the loveliness of the night landscape faded from his thought and perceptions. He was full of conflicting feelings. He felt a contempt for Bonamy's selfish weakness of character; yet he could not, by thinking of this, excuse himself. The physician is sent to the sick.

There was the light in the sitting-room—the lamp burned as steadily as it could have done if the house were at peace. The place had all its old stateliness; for the outer circumstances of our lives will not respond to the trouble within. Who could have guessed that a solitary and desperate man was the owner of this house? There he sat by this cheerful home-light with hardly one ray of hope in his life and with a pistol, newly charged, on the table in front of him?

Whittaker opened the smaller front gate quietly and then took his course up the path across the black belts made by the long shadows of the poplars, toward the porch. The large front door stood open as Nancy had left it, but Mark had closed the door from the hall-way to the sitting-room on his return to that room after Nancy's departure. Whittaker, with much palpitation, knocked at this inner door.

"Come in." The voice had a strangely broken sound.

Mark was greatly surprised at seeing his visitor. Of all men, Whittaker! Nevertheless, he was glad to see him; if for no other reason, because he was somebody—a human being.

"Did you come from her?" he asked with downcast eyes.

"From whom?"

"From my wife?"

"I have not seen her," said Whittaker, somewhat coldly. "But if you wish to send any message, I will take it."

Bonamy motioned him to a chair, and then sat silent for a long time.

"I am afraid I ought not to have trespassed on you in your trouble. But I could not think of any other person likely to come to you, and it is a dreadful thing to be alone in trouble."

"It is," said Mark, gloomily. Then after a pause, "It is curious *you* should come, though."

"Why?"

"Well, my brother-in-law and my sister are ashamed to come. My old friends all stay away. You have no reason even to like me. Certainly you wouldn't take my part against Roxy?"

"Of course not. I think Mrs. Bonamy a good woman." Whittaker purposely spoke in a cool tone that he might not arouse any antagonism in Mark.

Mark sat still a moment, then slowly closed his fist and brought it down upon the table like a hammer.

"God!" he muttered between his teeth. "You make me mad, Mr. Whittaker."

"You ought not to be angry," said Whittaker with firmness. "I think she deserves that and more."

"But you speak so coldly. A good woman! Oh, Lord! what a fool I have been! A good woman! Why, I tell you, here, Mr. Whittaker, that she is a grand woman." Here Mark got to his feet and paced the floor. "There are no words for her. I hate myself. I curse myself. I thought myself somebody. I was proud of my

family and of my popularity, and the devil only knows what besides. What an infernal fool I was! I looked down on her. I did not think she could have any pride, except in me and what belonged to me. I wounded her proud spirit every day. Proud? Why, that—Oh, God! what shall I call her? I tell you she went away from here to-day leaving behind every scrap and trinket that had been bought with my money. When she spurned me she spurned everything, even the clothes she wore as my wife, and went out as poor and proud as she came. And people thought she was proud of me. And I stung her pride with my devilish foolishness and then, when at last she answered me with defiance I thought I was injured. I felt sorry for myself and angry at her for being so severe, and I rushed straight into the trap the devil had set for me. God! what a fool I was to think myself better than my poor, poor Roxy! My poor, poor, proud, broken-hearted Roxy! Oh, I can't stand it. I'm going to kill myself like Judas and get out of the way. It's all there is left to do. Poor, poor girl! If I'd only died a year ago!" And Mark laid his head on the table and burst into tears, sobbing convulsively, only coming back now and then to the same piteous refrain: Poor Roxy!

Whittaker caught sight of the loaded saddle-pistol on the table and shuddered. He had not come too soon, then. He left Mark to his tears for a while. But, when the gust of weeping had spent itself, he took the word again.

"What do you want to kill yourself for?"

"What's the use of living when you despise yourself, and everybody despises you? I'm not fit to live, and you know it, Mr. Whittaker."

"Very likely. Few men are quite fit to live. But let us say that you are very bad. You *have* acted very badly. If you did not feel so much ashamed of yourself, I should try to make you ashamed. But you are only adding one bad action to another in killing yourself. It's not a brave thing to do."

"It may not be right, but it is the bravest thing left for me, I should say."

"Well, it's braver than some other things. But when you talk about killing yourself because you despise yourself and everybody despises you, you are only running away from the natural penalty of your sin. You hate yourself; very good—you ought to hate yourself. But you ought to have courage to live and face your own contempt, and that of everybody else. That is the brave way. The sin having been committed, the very best thing left is to take patiently the punishment."

"Then I'm a coward. I suppose I'm about as bad as a man can get to be."

"No," said Whittaker, speaking slowly, as he always did when theoretical theology came into conflict with practical wisdom. "I don't think you're all bad, by any means. You're a good deal better with that pistol there by you than you have been heretofore."

Bonamy looked puzzled.

"I like you better now, because you loathe your evil. The time has been when you were just as bad as now,—capable of this same sin,—but entirely satisfied with yourself. Isn't that so?"

Mark only shivered.

"You are no worse to-night than you were a year ago. But then you were blind. Now you see. Thank God that you see! The sight is not a cheerful one, but a man

who sees is worth a dozen blind men. Now don't be a coward, and run away from the work before you."

"What work?"

"What specific work, I don't know. You built on sand. The house has gone to pieces. The first work is to clear away the rubbish, and get ready to build on a deeper foundation. The rubbish heap is hateful, but it is yours. You've no right to run away and leave it, a ghastly eye-sore to everybody else, have you?"

Mark leaned his head down again on the table, and groaned. Then, after a long time, he relieved himself by confessing many things to the minister.

Whittaker talked with him thus till the light of the May morning shone in at the window. Then he rose up to go.

"Will you see Roxy?" asked Mark, with downcast eyes and utter dejection of voice.

"Sooner or later, yes. I will see her to-day, if you have anything for me to say to her."

"I don't want to ask anything of her. She did just right. Tell her that I say so. But I wish she could only know that I had turned back yesterday with a full purpose of telling her everything. It would not have changed anything, but I wanted to confess. It is the hardest part of this trouble that I did not confess before. But she is so good I did not dare to."

"It was not brave of you, Mr. Bonamy."

"I see. I must make up my mind that I am a coward, besides all the rest." It was the one sensitive point of pride left in the humiliated man. He was nettled that Whittaker thought him cowardly.

"Good-bye!" Whittaker held out his hand.

"It was very good of you, Mr. Whittaker, to come

here to-night. I did not deserve it. I had no claim on you."

"Promise me one thing." And Whittaker held fast to Mark's hand. "No suicide."

"I do not want to make any promise," said Mark, stubbornly.

"Let me tell you, Mr. Bonamy, that there is a brave life before you. I think the best of your life is to come."

"There could be nothing worse than my life so far, unless it is to live on with the feeling that I had broken the heart of that poor, good, glorious Roxy that was mine."

Whittaker drew him to the porch.

"It was black night an hour ago. If a man had said to you, 'There will never be any daylight,' you would have called him a fool for his unbelief. I tell you, friend, that already I see the sunlight on the clouds over your life. You are down in the dust. That is the best of it. The old life must be all destroyed first. I cannot tell you how, but there is a better life for you yet to come. I am sure of it."

"But my wretched Roxy!"

"You can't help what is gone. Roxy has suffered, and will suffer terribly. It is awful to think of it. But Roxy has a brave soul. She will get good even out of such sorrow. Now wait and suffer your part like a man. Don't run out of the fight; stand fire to the bitter end."

Just at that moment, the first beams of the sun struck the tops of the Kentucky hills, and put a halo about them. A thin white mist of lace-like thinness, partly veiled the smooth surface of the river. The whole landscape seemed to be coming out of obscurity into glory. The bluebirds and the yellow-hammers and the queevy-quavies

began to sing in the orchard, and the great swarms of blackbirds perching in the sycamores waked up in a chor is of " chip! chip chulurr-rr-rr-rr!"

"What a beautiful morning! God is good!" said Whittaker. "Take heart a little. Promise for one week that you will bear with your despair. No suicide for a week!"

"I promise," said Mark, faintly, looking wistfully out on the river, changing from gold to silvery whiteness.

"You'll lend me the pistol for a week?"

"You can't trust me, then?"

"If you can trust yourself."

Mark felt the rebuke, and brought out the great saddle-pistol. Whittaker again shook hands and started down the walk, carrying the pistol awkwardly enough. Along the street he met sleepy-looking boys going out for the cows, and people with baskets on their arms hurrying to the little market-house. They all stared with wonder at the minister with a " horse-pistol in his hand."

CHAPTER L.

A WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER.

Roxy was sleeping heavily, after a weary night, and Twonnet left her in charge of the stepmother and Jemima, while she came home to breakfast. The breakfast at Lefaure's was eaten on all pleasant mornings in the open vine-covered porch overlooking the water, and here Mr Whittaker and Twonnet met after their watching. None of the family were aware of Whittaker's night walk to Bonamy's. The scandal was not a subject that could be conveniently discussed at table, but Mrs. Lefaure could not forbear some lively expressions of her hatred of Mark.

"You forget," said Whittaker, rather timidly, as was his wont in contradiction, "that Bonamy must suffer dreadfully."

"He ought to. It serves him right," said Mrs. Lefaure, and Twonnet's face showed that she cordially agreed with her mother. Whittaker was silent. He saw that any further advance of a skirmish line in that direction would certainly provoke a lively fire in front. Lefaure, who enjoyed a controversy keenly when he was not a party to it, tried in vain to encourage the minister to make further reply, but he could not. Twonnet thought, in her woman's indignation, that it was a shame for such a man as Mr. Whittaker to take up for Bonamy. She had always prophesied evil of this marriage. Now the evil had come, she felt justified in unlimited hatred of Mark. In propor

tion, therefore, to her admiration for Whittaker, was her aversion to his softening, in any way, Mark's guilt. Hanging was too good for him, she was sure. Perhaps, also, there was just a little bit of pride in Twonnet, a sense of the importance of her part as next friend and champion of Roxy.

But at this stage of the conversation, the little red-faced Louis, who had been foraging in Mr. Whittaker's room on a general search after information, came down the stairs with large eyes and a look more apoplectic than usual, and burst into speech in a polyglot fashion, thus:

"Papa, il y a dans la chambre de Monsieur Veetaker un fort grand horse-pistol!"

"Que dis-tu?" said his father, giving attention at the same time to the filling up of a plate of breakfast for the venerable grandfather, whose ailments kept him in bed in the morning. "What do you say, Louis?" he asked, in a half-amused way, supposing that the little Paul Pry had either misused words, or mistaken something else for a horse-pistol.

"I must put that away," said Whittaker, rising and excusing himself. "It is loaded."

When he returned to the mystified group at the table, he said briefly that the pistol belonged to Mark Bonamy.

"How did you get it?" asked Twonnet.

"I persuaded him to let me have it."

"You have been there then?" said Mr. Lefaure.

"Yes, certainly."

Twonnet's indignation toward Whittaker died out at once, giving place to a humbling sense of his superiority. If there is one thing a woman cannot stand, it is bloodshed—unless it be upon a large scale. Twonnet's hatred of Mark changed to pity as she imagined him despairing

and seeking death, and though, a moment ago, she was sure that he deserved capital punishment, she was horrified at thought of his committing suicide alone in a deserted house. Of course this sudden change was inconsistent, but it is one of the advantages of women, that, not pretending to be logical, they can change front on the instant, when they see fit. Twonnet saw the wisdom of Whittaker's course, and, comprehending the excellence of the motives she had mistaken before, she made Whittaker a hero by brevet, on the field, investing him, in her imagination, with a complete outfit of all the qualities necessary to the character. For she was a woman, and hero-making is a woman's work ; even your sensible and practical woman must take to hero-making, sooner or later. And a man who steals out at night, by a sort of prescience, at the very right moment of moments, when the pistol is all loaded and leveled at the victim's head, throws up the suicidal arm, wrests the weapon from his grasp, pacifies the desperate wretch, and then walks stealthily away with the great pistol to his own home,—what is he but a hero of heroes ? The impulsive Twonnet had often felt—one of her temperament could not but feel—the attraction of a man of such steadiness and reserve as Whittaker. But now forthwith, she began to build him a shrine in her heart. And this in the face of all the contradictions of her practical good sense, which did not fail to warn her of the danger of premature shrine-building on the part of young women. But Twonnet remembered gratefully that he had praised her the day before. And it was something now to be associated with him in trying to bring some good out of this great evil.

" Are you coming to see Roxy to-day ? " she asked, as she prepared to return to her charge.

"I hardly think so. I am ready whenever Mrs. Bonamy wants me to give her any help she needs. But she needs less help than anybody in this wretched affair."

"But what can we do for Roxy? How is all this coming out? She will die if she lies there that way."

"I don't know how things will come out. We can't do much for her. But I hope that she will not lie helpless long. She is the one strong one among them all, and when the shock is past I have hope that she will see, better than I can, what ought to be done. When she sees it, she will do it."

"But what ought she to do?"

"I don't know. I haven't a notion. I am just learning that general principles don't apply in a case like this. What a thing it is to learn that difficult cases have a law of their own! If anybody can find out what is right, Roxy will. There must be a right even in such a wretched state of things."

"I don't see what she can do."

"Neither do I. But if she can't do anything, then nothing can be done, I suppose. We must look to the strong, and not to the weak, for deliverance."

"But she isn't to blame, and it seems hardly fair that the burden should rest on her."

"That is the very reason, I suppose. Only the good can save the bad. But here, I am trying to apply general principles. Let's wait till Roxy shows the way. She has made great mistakes of judgment, but in matters of right and wrong, she has a wonderful intuition. After she got free from the false shackles of other people's rules, her treatment of Mark was just right. She won him so completely that, now she has deserted him, he is full of praises of her. And if the gossips had only stayed away

two hours, she would have heard the whole thing from him. He was coming home to tell her."

Something in this high praise of Roxy wounded Twonnet just a little. Her position as faithful next friend did not seem so important as she had hoped. Whittaker had given her no word of praise. "It's all Roxy, Roxy," she murmured to herself as she went toward Adams's house. For what is the use of setting up a private hero and building a shrine, if, after all, your hero will give you no look of recognition for your pains?

Conscience is a task-master with a strange logic. Perform at its bidding one hard thing and it does not reason from your performance to reward or repose. Its *ergo* is turned the other way. Thou hast done well, *ergo* thou shalt do better. Up! get thee out again, till I find the limit of thy strength. Blessed is he who accepts the challenge. Whittaker's theory that a physician ought to go to the sick and not to the well is one not very much in vogue among parsons and churches nowadays: witness the rank growth of steeples in the well-to-do quarters of cities—mortgaged and bankrupted steeples, too many of them. But then the rich man enters not the kingdom of heaven easily—let us not grudge him his lion's share of the missionary labor of the world, and let us not blame those zealous and self-denying men who hear the voice of the Lord forever assuring them that they are commissioned to the church of St. Dives in the West. It is only commonplace and old-fashioned men like Whittaker who must be trying to reach the publicans and sinners of the nineteenth century, and who have idiotic notions that the lost sheep and the prodigal son have applications to our time.

But Whittaker was just foolish enough to set out on

this morning to find Nancy Kirtley, and to see what could be done for her. First finding Haz on his dray, he entered into conversation with him, asking him where his sister was to be found. This catechism of Cain was evidently very troublesome to Kirtley, who would have felt some brotherly interest in his sister had it not been that Mrs. Haz felt otherwise. But there cannot be more than one head to a family. Haz had to feel that Nancy was a great disgrace, fit only to be put out-of-doors, because his wife had settled that matter. When Simon says wig-wag who shall refuse to obey? He answered very briefly that Nancy had left the house in the night and had not come back. To avoid further questions he drove off.

Then Whittaker went to Mr. Highbury, the elder. Did he go in a sort of desperate sarcasm to Highbury for help? Or, did he desire to teach the elder a lesson? Did he think that after all the Pharisee is quite as much a lost sheep as the publican or the harlot? And in seeking to set the Pharisee to find the lost was he seeking also to get the Pharisee to find himself, lost in the dreary wilderness of his self-conceit? At any rate he took Highbury into the back part of the store and told him that he had seen Mark the night before, and related to him something of the circumstances. Mr. Highbury thought it quite proper indeed, that a minister should try to reclaim Bonamy. For Bonamy was a man and not a woman, which makes a great difference. And he was a man of respectable family, and consequently an appropriate subject for labor. Besides, it was stealing a march on the Methodists, who would see that they were neglecting their own flock, and so on. But he cautioned Whittaker not to see Mrs. Bonamy. It might make talk.

"I am not going to see Mrs. Bonamy unless I'm spe-

cially sent for," said the minister. "But I want you to go with me to see Nancy Kirtley. It is not quite prudent for me to go alone, perhaps."

Highbury was silent. His countenance expressed in a splintered and fragmentary way half a dozen different emotions. That Whittaker should, under any circumstances, propose to see a girl of her low social position was a surprise to him. Such people might be saved perhaps, but it was not likely; and if they were saved it would no doubt be by such agencies as illiterate circuit-riders, and not by college-bred men. That Whittaker should converse with a dishonored woman was as much a matter of disgust to Highbury, the elder, as similar conduct had been to Simon, the Pharisee. That he should go now to see her while all the town was ablaze with the scandal, and, worst of all, that he should venture to ask him, Highbury, merchant, elder, well-to-do, and one of God's elect, besides, to go with him, was beyond all comprehension. Nevertheless, he looked round anxiously for some logical ground on which to base his refusal. He knew that Whittaker was a man singularly insensible to the logic of worldly prudence in such matters.

"I don't think it would do any good for us to see such a woman," he said, hesitating and reddening.

"Why, you know how tender and forgiving Christ was to such people," answered Whittaker.

Did ever anybody hear such preposterous reasoning? Is Christ to be quoted as an example to a respectable church member nowadays? Christ lived two thousand years ago, or thereabouts, as everybody knows, and the women that were "sinners in the town" in his day were —well, they were Jews, don't you know? Something quite different from wicked people in our time. High-

bury felt all this rather than thought it. And what he said was something else.

"I tell you what, Mr. Whittaker, there's great danger of fanaticism in talking that way. We've got to be careful to keep from bringing dishonor on the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Why, Mr. Highbury, that's just what Christ did all the time. He spent his time in bringing his own cause into disrepute whenever he could do any good by it."

"You talk very well, Mr. Whittaker. But you're not practical. It's the great failing of ministers that they're apt to be unpractical. Now, this is a practical age and I'm a practical man; I know what people say about ministers and such things. And I know it's no use for you to go to see a bad woman."

Here Highbury caught sight of a customer waiting for him and he hurried out to the front part of the store, where he was soon engaged in tearing off "bit calico" and selling coffee and nails and clocks and ribbons and vinegar and boots and clothes-lines and candy. As for Whittaker, he turned away and went to seek the lost alone.

He found Nancy at last, sitting under the bank on a log, gazing in dogged sullenness at the water. She had had no breakfast, and she did not know or care where she should find shelter. If only she could find some way of gratifying a resentment that was hardening into a desperate and malicious and universal animosity.

"What do you want?" she growled, as he approached.

"I want to do anything I can for you. You'll get sick sitting here with no breakfast. There's rain coming on now."

"That's none of your business."

"Why don't you go back to Haz's?"

"Because his wife's the very devil. Everybody's as bad as bad can be. Roxy Bonamy stole my beau. Everybody fooled weth me. Now everybody hates me, an' Mark, he wont give me no satisfaction, an' Lathers, he tried to make a fool out of me. Rocky Fork folks laughs at me an' town-folks wont come a-nigh me. Dog-on 'em all, I say! I'm agoin' to git squar' someways. I'll kill some on 'em. See ef I don't. They don't nobody keer fer me, an' I don' keer fer nobody."

Whittaker could not persuade her to go back to Haz's at first. After a while he went himself to mollify Haz's wife. The woman was loud-tongued and not very delicate in her scolding about Nance. But she had great respect for a man that wore good clothes, and she had a certain awe of a minister. By dint of agreeing with her as far as he could, and sympathizing with her in all her troubles and her disgrace, he persuaded her to consent for Nance to come back on condition, as Mrs. Kirtley stated it, that she should "hold her everlastin' jaw."

Then Whittaker returned to Nancy. Perhaps it was the softening effect of his kindness, or the change of mood produced by being obliged to talk, or the sense of utter desertion when Whittaker had walked away without explaining where he was going—some or all of these had so moved her that when he came back she was crying in hearty fashion. It was a selfish cry, no doubt, but there was at least some touch of half-human feeling in the self-pitying tears.

"Poor woman!" said Whittaker. "God help you! You have got a hard time."

"Haint I, though?" and she wept again. She had come to a point where pity was grateful to her.

He told her of the compact he had made on her behalf

with Mrs. Kirtley that Nancy should go back and not quarrel. But to all his persuasions she returned a negative shake of the head, while she kept on crying. The sense of her shame had at last entered her soul. She felt the loathing with which all the world regarded her. This might result in some good, Whittaker thought. But the chances were that it would result in desperation and fiendishness unless she could be brought to have a little hope.

The old-fashioned way that he had of thinking about Jesus Christ as though his life and acts were an example for himself, brought about a curious train of reasoning. The girl felt herself an outlaw. She could only be helped as Jesus had healed the outcast. He remembered how the Christ had broken the law by touching a leper. Some one must show a friendly cordiality to this woman who was a sinner, like the one that wept on the feet of the Master. He shrunk from the guilty girl in spite of himself. She felt it. He must conquer first the Pharisee in himself. After much hesitation and shrinking he approached her and laid his hand upon her arm. It produced a sudden revulsion.

"Come, you must go with me," he said.

She got up and went with him as she would have gone at that moment with any one good or evil who offered her a return to human fellowship. Luckily for Whittaker's courage, Haz's house was not far away and Slabtown was almost deserted except at steamboat time. He led her in as tenderly as he could if she had been a little child. She immediately crouched weeping in the chimney corner, and Whittaker sat down on a stool by the hearth. He talked with the virago sister-in-law until she became cheerful and offered Nancy some food. Then he shook

hands with both of them and departed, the wife of Haz standing in the door and saying as he disappeared:

"Well! Ef that air haint a man now, they haint none Lord, what a man he is now, ef he is a down-east Yankee! Haint he, Nance?"

But the girl only kept on crying and said nothing.

"You—you haint got a good word fer nobody," broke out Mrs. Kirtley.

But Nancy, weeping still, made no reply. A shower of rain was coming on out-of-doors, and the storm of Mrs. Kirtley's indignation continued to beat within.

CHAPTER LI

SALVATION BY HOOK AND BY CROOK.

"FATHER MILEY," the old Methodist minister, "superannuated" and living in the town, visited Roxy every day. There was nothing to offer but commonplace consolations and exhortations, but the old man's gentle words of sympathy and his pathetic prayers did her good while he was with her. Twonnet thought that Whittaker strained his delicacy too far in keeping away so long. She told Roxy something of Whittaker's visit to Mark. And Roxy set herself to wondering also why Mr. Whittaker had not come. But besides his fear of reproach if he should hasten his visit, he was afraid of saying prematurely what he had to say. He sent her some word of friendly sympathy by Twonnet each day. But it was quite possible to one of his cool and reserved temperament to wait till his counsel should be needed.

Roxy had the hardest time of all, in that she had nothing to do. Bonamy, in all his distress, busied himself in settling his business. There was one purpose clearly fixed in his mind. He meant to leave Luzerne. Whether to go by steamboat or by suicide he had not decided, but he was resolved to flee from surroundings that were hateful to him. The embarrassment lay in arranging his affairs so as to provide for the wife who would accept no provision, and to settle also in an honorable way his obligations to the unreasonable and vindictive Nancy.

Nancy's father, moved by some reviving parental affection,—possibly also by some prospect of getting something from Mark,—took her back to Rocky Fork, where at least she was free from the taunts of Haz Kirtley's wife, and where she could shut herself in from the sight of her deriding acquaintances. McGowan, too, became a little more peaceable now that Nancy was at home. He postponed his revenge, but did not give it up.

All the day following that of Roxy's desertion of Mark's house, she tried in vain to interest herself in some occupation. She went down to the sitting-room with its long clock and its bright rag-carpet, its homely old-fashioned pictures and the window where the honeysuckles grew. She tried as of old to arrange things, but she sank at once into listlessness and fell to looking out of the window at the hills and the sky. Then she asked Jemima for some sewing. But she did not take ten stitches. Her hands lay idle in her lap and she sat for half an hour at a time without making any motion, except to sigh heavily. One cannot take up an old life where it was left off. Roxy was not the same Roxy. The whole memory of what had intervened and the change in her very nature wrought by it rendered the old life impossible. She could never more be a young Saint Theresa, romantically longing for martyrdom ; she was a full-grown woman with large and sorrowful experience. The girl may be developed into the woman—the woman cannot be repressed into the girl again. It is the inevitable law of all progression in character and experience. The sun will never return a single degree on the dial of Ahaz, for all our praying and turning of our faces to the wall. In this motionless despondency passed the two days following Roxy's return to her father's house. Friends enough came to see her. Most of them

volunteered approval of her course in leaving her husband, and this approval for some reason always hurt her Some of them angered her by advising a divorce, even assuring her that she should insist on her share of the property. And some who were theologically inclined, told her on the authority of certain preachers and commentators that if she had remained with her husband she would have committed a crime herself. From her aversion to this sort of consolation it came that her hours with her friends were even more intolerable than the time of loneliness and listless inactivity. She wished, like the much be-comforted man in the land of Uz, for a surcease of sympathy.

On the third day, which was Saturday, she became restless. She told her father that she ought to do something. The old eagerness for a definite purpose large enough to tax her energies awakened.

Adams grew uneasy as he saw this restlessness, and went on his own account to ask Whittaker to come and advise her.

"I thought you would have come before," said Roxy, when she saw him.

"Perhaps I ought to have come, but I thought however much you might suffer, you needed the services of a minister least of all. I went especially to the weak and the guilty. I waited until you wanted me. I thought you would rouse yourself after awhile, and then maybe I could do some good in coming."

"Mr. Whittaker, I want to do something. I shall go mad, if I sit here long and think."

"Of course you must do something. That is natural to you, and it's good that you've come to that so soon. It is a healthy sign."

"What can I do? I cannot interest myself in anything."

"You must work for somebody else. That is your remedy."

"But I don't know anybody that is in trouble. Do you?"

Whittaker was silent for a long time. Then he said, deliberately:

"I only know two people besides yourself in great trouble. You know them."

Roxy colored, and shuddered a little. She tried to understand what this word might signify. It was only after some effort that she could speak.

"You know I can't help *them*."

"I don't see how you can, myself. I half hoped that you could see some way. But if you don't see any, I suppose there is none."

Roxy was about to resent the intimation that she ought to do anything for Mark or Nancy; but something in Whittaker's words impressed her. The habit of conscientious and self-denying action made her mind receptive to any suggestion of difficult duty, and there was comfort in Whittaker's deferential confidence in her.

"Do you think I did wrong, then, to come away? I *couldn't* stay."

"You did just what I should expect of *you*. I couldn't say more. Twonnet told you, I suppose, that Mark rode hard that day to get home and tell you himself. He was too late, and he deserved all he has suffered. He knows that, and respects—even admires—your course."

"But you don't think I ought to go back."

"I don't think your husband has the slightest claim on you. I only say that I do not see anything but evil in

this business, unless you see some way to turn it to good."

"But why am *I* bound to do anything? I haven't done the evil."

"Only because you are the innocent one, and the strong one. But I don't want you to think that I say you are *bound* to do anything. I don't think you are. I am not sure you can do anything. I cannot see at all further than I have said. I'm sure you'll do whatever you find to do, and you have done all one could demand. If there is anything else you can do, it is a matter of privilege, rather than of duty. The highest actions are of that kind."

"I'm afraid you've added to my trouble," she said, as Whittaker rose to go. "But it is very good of you to have so much confidence in me, though it is of no use. I shall never go back to Mark, and I don't see what I can do for him."

"I do not think of any advice I can give. Do not feel any *ought* about anything. Be as quiet as you can over Sunday. Then, if you feel that you might be helped by any advice of mine on Monday, I will come again. But do not trust my judgment; do not let anybody dictate. Follow the impulse of your own sense of what you can and ought to do. That is the only guide in a case like this." Then, suddenly dropping for an instant his reserve, he took her offered hand, and said, with much feeling: "And God help you, my poor, dear, good friend, and give you peace."

It was the first word of sympathy Roxy had received that touched the great deep of sorrow in her heart. The unexpectedness of the tone, from one so quiet and shy as Whittaker, the instantaneous revelation of intense sympathy, produced a quick reaction in her mood; and when

he was gone, she buried her face in her hands, and wept tears that were medicine to her spirit.

With the tears came also, by degrees, the clearer vision that Whittaker looked for. The source of his wise prescience of the action of Roxy's moral nature is not far to seek. A man of high conscience is able to forecast something of the movements of one whose moral orbit is nearly in the same plane. For himself, this whole affair had come so close to him, that it produced a powerful awakening. The half-finished sermon on the subject of "Salvation by Faith Only," on which he had been writing, seemed to him uninteresting. The metaphysics of salvation are not of so much consequence, when one is engaged in the practice of actually saving men. He felt rising in him the rebellion of the practical man against the theoretical, and, had he given expression to his real feelings, he would have discoursed perhaps on "Salvation by Hook or by Crook," so important did it seem to him to save men by any rope or pole that would reach them, rather than to stand philosophizing about it, after the manner of a Reformer or a Church Father of seventy-four guns. He could not preach the sermon; it was like pine shavings in his mouth. It was now too late to write another. He went into the pulpit on Sunday morning, and read the story of the woman that wept on the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Respectable, and then he read the parable of the two debtors, spoken to this Deacon Simon Pharisee. It was not a sermon but something better,—living words out of the living heart of a man. He tried not to be personal, but Highbury made up his mind that this kind of talking was not suitable to a decorous church, and that he must see that Whittaker's relation with the church in Luzerne should be dissolved. A man who, in-

stead of denouncing the Pharisees,—those people that hated and killed Christ,—should venture to intimate that there were Pharisees nowadays even in churches of his own denomination, was not to be endured. There is no safe ground for a good sound preacher, but to attack ancient wickedness and the sins and superstitions of foreign countries. If he must come closer home, there are denominations rival to his own, that need scathing. But somehow the people in Whittaker's little congregation were very much moved by this sermon, and from that time the church began to fill up, and who does not know that full pews hide heresies?

But that Sunday was no day of rest for Roxy. When Whittaker had suggested that Roxy might do something to help the guilty ones, it was only with a vague notion that any act of forgiveness would do good. He was sincere when he said that he could not see what she could do. It was only his blind faith in the power of Roxy's enthusiasm and high moral aspiration that had awakened this indefinite hope. And all this Sunday long, the old martyr spirit of Roxy's girlhood had been coming back. It was not Texas, now. Why should she, who had always sighed to dare great things and to make great sacrifices,—why should she not now put down her just pride and anger, and, by the sacrifice, save those who had crucified her? Every great possibility is a challenge to an ambitious spirit. She had wanted an extraordinary field, and had dreamed romantic dreams of suffering for Christ. And now Texas had come to her very door!

All that Sunday forenoon Twonnet did not come. Roxy must talk to somebody. She told her step-mother first that she was thinking whether she ought not go back to Mark and help him to do better. Mrs. Adams was sur-

prised, but she only answered "Very likely," which meaningless response irritated Roxy. Jemima thought for her part that men were not to be trusted anyways. There was Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold and George the Third, to say nothing of John Tyler, at that very time a "renegade president." And Roxy's father denounced bitterly a plan that he had dreaded from the beginning Elder Highbury, to make some atonement for having refused to see Nancy Kirtley, condescended to call on Roxy Bonamy this Sunday afternoon, the store being closed and there being nothing else to do. He assured her that she had done right in leaving, and he hoped she would never go back, because it was the opinion of many good preachers whom he cited that to return to a faithless husband or wife was a great sin. The Methodist class-leader expressed similar views. These opinions from those who did not know that she was meditating such a step staggered and confounded the scrupulous Roxy.

But Mrs. Hanks put the finishing blow to her plan. For she came also, as in duty bound, and she told Roxy confidentially that she thought it very wise not to begin suit for a divorce. Roxy could get her share of the property. But it was better to be forgiving. Mark was a good sort of a fellow, anyhow. A great many women had to forgive such things. A body had to put up with something. Mark was well off and very smart, and if Roxy should go back, why, all the property would be hers, and besides, you know, grass widows are not much thought of.

This logic of laxity and pity of the devil made Roxy hate her half-formed purpose to return. It would seem to such people as her aunt to be a purely selfish one. And Mrs. Hanks had made it seem so bad to Roxy that she surrendered the thought of returning to her husband

She had tried the cage of circumstance, and the bars wounded her but would not yield to all her beating. She sank back again into listless despair. She did not talk, she only sighed.

When darkness came, the father went out to take the air, and the step-mother went to meeting. There were no longer any visitors in the house, and Roxy sat in the old sitting-room with her hands crossed in her lap in a hopelessness that had no ray of light in it. The room was the same as in the years before, but she who had dreamed there of high achievement was now a broken-hearted prisoner of evil circumstance. It seemed to her that the old clock would kill her. It was so long in swinging from one tick to another. What eternities seconds come to be when one sits with hands crossed, the despairing palms upward,—sits thus and sighs with no hope in life but to sit thus and sigh! The "forever—never" of the clock was to Roxy a forever of perdition and a never of hope. Jemima fell into a slumber, while Roxy continued to watch the slow-beating and awful clock.

Since there was no hope of any great change in Roxy's life, she looked eagerly for small and unimportant interruptions of her sorrow. She wished that her father would come back, or that Mrs. Rachel wonld return from church. In thus wishing she slowly turned her head toward the front window. It was the very honeysuckle-covered window into which her lover had looked on that day that he brought her the delusive good news.

She turned her eyes in a purposeless way to this window. She quickly pressed her hands across her heart and gasped for breath. There, framed in the darkness of the clouded night, was the face of Mark.

It was close against the window pane, the eager eyes

were fastened on her. In an instant more the face had disappeared.

Roxy screamed and fell fainting on the floor. Jemima ran to her assistance. And when later Roxy explained to the family that she had seen Mark's face at the window, they were sure that it was an illusion of her fancy. For besides the improbability of it, Jemima was facing the window all the time and had seen nothing at all.

But in that one view of the face, Roxy read all the torture that Mark had endured. Contrasted as it was in her mind with the old memory of the happy and hopeful Mark of the missionary days, looking into that very window, it was a vivid picture of hopeless wretchedness. All the mighty pity of her nature was roused. There must be something she could do to draw this wrecked husband of hers out of his living perdition. That long sleepless night she lay and planned, and waited for the morning that she might advise and execute.

CHAPTER LII.

AN EXPEDITION.

When Whittaker rose on Monday morning, he found Adams waiting for him on the porch below. It was but half-past five o'clock, but the shoe-maker had waited half an hour already. This sorrow had moved him so deeply that he could no longer disguise his sensitiveness under a rugged and contradictory manner, as was his wont.

"Roxy would like to see you, Mr. Whittaker," he said. "And I want to tell you before you go, that I think she is getting a notion that she ought to go back to Mark. I want you to persuade her to stay where she is."

Whittaker hesitated.

"Is it quite fair," he said, after awhile, "for you to bargain with a doctor beforehand that he shall prescribe such and such remedies? You must leave me free."

"To be sure, to be sure," grumbled Adams. "But why should you want her to leave her father's house to go back to such a man? Why can't she be comfortable where she is?"

"We have to take things as we find them. You don't grumble at a man for having big or little feet. You have to fit the feet he brings. I leave it to your good sense whether Roxy is likely to be happy at home."

"She was once. I wish she'd stayed there."

"But she can't be contented at home now—she can't blot out the years since she was married."

"But think of the humiliation of her going back."

"Yes, I know."

"You are going to advise her to go back, I suppose?"

"No, I can't do that. That is a hard road, and I don't know how strong she is. Let her take her own course; right for one is wrong for another. She is an extraordinary woman, Mr. Adams."

Adams made no reply, and they took their way to his house. Roxy was pacing the floor when they came in.

"Mr. Whittaker," she said anxiously, "Mr. Highbury says, and other people say, that it would be a sin for me to forgive Mark, and to go back. I want you to tell me what you think about it."

"It is never wrong to do good. It cannot be wrong to do good."

"I am going back to Mark, then," she said, swiftly. "He looked through that window at me last night, and his face was so wretched that I couldn't sleep all night. Surely it can't be wrong to help him out of his misery."

"There is no law against your trying to be as forgiving and as good as God. You must judge whether you can finish this task you are undertaking."

Roxy gave her arms an excited twitch, stretching them downward their full length. Her eyes shone with a feverish luster, and Whittaker could not but observe that dilatation of the nostrils and wide openness of the eyelids that expressed a deep and eager excitement. After awhile she spoke, in a lower voice:

"Where is Nancy Kirtley?"

"She is at her father's."

Roxy looked puzzled.

"I must see her first," she said. "I have a plan, and I must see her."

Whittaker looked in her eyes. The lids drooped over pupils that seemed drawn to a point. He half-guessed the purpose she was trying to conceal.

"Dear friend," he said, "I think I know what your plan is. It is a hard road you are about to travel. Better to draw back now than to make matters worse by failure, after a while. I dare not advise you to do such a thing. It frightens me to think of it."

"Will there be anything wrong in it?"

"No. But are you able to do it? Are you able to drink this cup and be baptized with this baptism? As for the act you are thinking of in regard to Nancy, it is noble —the noblest possible."

"I would like to do the noblest thing possible, and God helping me, I am going to try." Again she twitched her arms and paced the floor. "Don't discourage me. I know it will be hard. Give me all the encouragement you can. Tell me that God will help."

"Indeed he will. Indeed he will," said Whittaker, in a husky voice. The tone of entreaty in which Roxy had spoken deeply moved all in the room. Jemima was standing by the door wiping her eyes with her apron, and Adams was looking out of the window through the tears he could neither keep back nor conceal.

"Promise that you will not let me faint by the way— that you'll give a word of encouragement or reproof, if I falter. For I tell you, Mr. Whittaker, I've thought all night about this, and, let it cost what it will, I mean to undo this evil. If God helps me, I'll live and die to overcome it. This is my work, for the rest of my time. Now I have found it, do not say anything to keep me from it."

"God forbid!" said Whittaker. But he bowed his head upon his hand.

"Roxy," said the old shoe-maker, "you didn't do this thing—this trouble is none of your making What do you concern yourself about it for? All sinners have to suffer, and Mark only suffers what he deserves."

It touched Roxy to hear her father assume a pleading tone. It had never been his custom, in speaking to her, to speak otherwise than with authority.

"You are wrong, father," she said, putting her hand tremblingly upon his arm. She had never caressed him so much within her memory. "Mark is not the only one to blame. If I had been wiser, and kinder, and gentler than I was, it would not have happened. It is my fault. If I had only known—if I had only known! You are too hard on Mark, all of you." She turned toward Whittaker as she uttered this last word.

"It is the best sign that you will succeed, Roxy, that you can extenuate his fault. That is a true sign of forgiveness," said Whittaker.

"Come right along to breakfast," said Jemima. "The biscuits is gettin' cold."

But she said this with so much pathos that her inflection was ludicrously out of keeping with the subject of biscuits.

The old shoe-maker went out the door and away to his work fasting. Nothing was so intolerable to him as his own sensibility. Whittaker refused the invitation to breakfast and took his leave. When he had gone out of the house he could not think where Roxy would get a horse for her journey. But just in front of Lefaure's house he met old Bob riding Roxy's own saddle-horse. For Bob had taken advantage of the present disorder of the Bonamy place to treat himself to many and various luxuries. Among others was that of riding when he came into the

town on an errand. Besides the pleasure of a motion that cost him no effort, it suited his dignity to ride.

"Hello, Bob!" said Whittaker, "how's Mr. Bonamy?"

"Po'ly sah, mighty po'ly. Walks roun' de house mos' all night, sah."

"I see you ride a good deal, Bob," said the minister mischievously. "Do you have rheumatism?"

"Yes sah, I'se pow'ful weak dese times, sah. But I rides 'cause de hoss needs de exe'cise."

"I think Mrs. Bonamy wants that horse to-day, Bob."

"She do?" Bob's eyes grew to saucers.

"You just come in here an I'll give you a side-saddle and then you take the horse over to Mrs. Bonamy and tell her I sent you."

Bob's ardent wish had been that Roxy should return. Now he was like them that dream as he put on the horse an old side-saddle of Mrs. Lefaure's and conveyed the "clay-bank colt," as he called the horse, over to Roxy.

Roxy had yielded to the entreaties of Jemima, and was endeavoring to swallow a cup of coffee when the sight of Bob at the kitchen door made her start with surprise, and gave her a feeling of pain and pleasure.

"Good morning, Bob," she said.

"Good mornin' Mis' Roxy. I'se pow'ful glad to see you ag'in. It's awful solemcholy down to ou' house dese days."

"How's Mr. Bonamy?"

"Well, now, to tell de trufe, on'y kinder middlin' and sorter fah like you know." Bob thought it best to be diplomatically non-committal. "I see Mr. Whittaker jis now and he thought you mout like to use Dick to-day and I fotch him over for you."

"I do want Dick. Just leave him tied out there, Bob."

"You fetch him home yo'self, Mis' Roxy? Or you want me to come ahtah him?"

"I'll fetch him."

"Good Lorgoramity!" said Bob, and this chuckling exclamation as he turned away scratching his head in bewilderment did Roxy good. It was the beginning of new things.

She needed the encouragement of a good omen in her long ride over the rocky roads that day. Part of the road she had traveled in happier days on her way to quarterly meetings, and the rest she found by inquiring her way from one little hamlet, or country store, or blacksmith's shop, to another. Behind her she left the village in a state of vague and violent surprise. Bonamy's wife had been seen riding out of town on her own horse. What could it mean? Mrs. Tartrum appointed herself a committee of one to inquire of Rachel Adams at her shop, but as Mrs. Adams did not know for what purpose Roxy had gone to see Nancy, Mother Tartrum set afloat a surmise which soon deepened into a certainty, that Roxy had gone in search of evidence for a divorce suit.

But ever as Roxy left the better farm-houses and more cultivated farms of the hill country next the river, and penetrated into the hollows where the ground was steep and rocky and the people ignorant and thriftless, there came over her a spirit of depression and fear. She shrunk from the burden of this day as a martyr from the stake. And as she drew nearer to the Kirtley house, she suffered her horse to move more and more slowly over the rough road. But at last she rode up to the fence of what she was sure must be Gid Kirtley's cabin. Her heart beat violently. There was no stile, and no one to help her dismount. The smoke curled lazily out of the barrel that

formed the top of the stick chimney. The dogs barked in a half-threatening and half-indifferent way, baying awhile and then lying down again, seeming to take turns in making a noise. Roxy looked all around the inhospitable house in vain for some one to assist her. The place had a hostile and sinister appearance. She felt faint and weak, and almost regretful that she had undertaken so difficult a mission. She dismounted at last on a corner of the rickety fence of rails and then jumped down to the ground, and tied her horse herself, the dogs smelling her garments and bristling angrily all the time.

From the cabin window Nance had watched her.

"There's that blamed Roxy Bonamy," she said to her mother. "What's she come fer? No good, I'll bet."

"I 'low I'll go and help her off her hoss," said the old woman.

"No you wont, nuther. Let her help herself. Them town women thinks everybody orter run after 'em. She's come to sass me, I s'pose. Liker'n not she means to kill me. I'll show her."

And the desperate Nancy seized a stout butcher knife and hid it beneath her apron. "Now let her look out," she said. And she seated herself on the corner of the hearth.

Roxy, environed by dogs, knocked at the door. The old woman raised the latch and opened it slowly, saying coldly:

"Howdy. Walk in."

"Is Nancy Kirtley here; I want to see her?" said Roxy.

"Thar she is."

Nancy sat sullen on the hearth. The old woman gave Roxy a chair. Then she lit her pipe and sat down herself.

"You're having a hard time, Nancy," said Roxy.

"YOU'RE HAVING A HARD TIME, NANCY," SAID ROXY.

"What's that your business?" said Nancy.

"Well, I thought maybe I could help you," said Roxy; but all hope seemed to die out of her heart as she spoke.

"They can't nobody help *me*. They wont nobody look at me no more. The gals all larfs at me bekase they're so glad I'm out of their way. And the young fellers, they wont be seed here no more. Thar's even Jim McGowan wont look at me no more. An' it's all along of you and your man. Ugh! I'll git even yet!" Nancy spoke the last with a sudden burst of angry fire, with her teeth shut and her fist shaken in Roxy's face.

"Nancy, I think I can help you out of your troubles. I'm going back to live with my husband and I want to help you, too."

"You're goin' back! You're goin' back! An' me, I'm left out here, poor and larfed at, an' then when my baby's born, everybody'll larf at it, too. Blame you all! It's too confounded mean." And Nancy began to cry.

"But I think I can fix a plan so that nobody will laugh at you or at your child. You are young yet, and you are so handsome."

Roxy said this not with a purpose to flatter the girl, but almost involuntarily, for, despite the trouble Nancy had suffered, and the scowl on her face, there was a beauty about it that Roxy could not but acknowledge. The compliment went far toward softening Nancy. Roxy now drew her chair a little toward Nancy's, but the other drew back, afraid of some treachery.

"Nancy," said Roxy, standing up, "I want to talk to you in private. I wont hurt you, poor girl."

Nancy in turn was impressed. She felt Roxy's superiority and mastery much as an animal might. As she had drawn her chair, now, close against the jamb, she could not

draw it away from Roxy any farther. Roxy planted her own chair close by Nancy's. She had determined to conquer all shrinking and disgust. She sat down by the girl, who now turned her head and looked sullenly into the fire, clutching the knife under her apron, so as to be ready if there should be need of defense.

Roxy began to whisper in her ear. She told Nancy how much she had hated her when she saw her that day with Mark's watch-seal and Testament, and heard what she had to tell. She told her how she had felt since, how she could not sleep at night. All of this made Nancy uneasy, but it accomplished what Roxy meant it should. It opened the way for an understanding. Then she told about Mark's looking in at the window, and of what she had thought in the night, and how she wanted to help Nancy, and how the people at home didn't want her to.

It was hard for Nancy to understand this. She had in herself no alphabet by which she could spell out the exercises of a mind like Roxy's; but she did get from this confession a sense of the superior goodness of the woman who talked to her. Her suspicions were gradually lulled, and her resentment toward Roxy became by degrees less keen. In fact, since Mark had rebuffed her, and she had come to understand her situation, she had been more anxions to find means of escape, than even to find opportunity for revenge.

"Now," said Roxy, "I want to help you."

"You can't do nothin'," said Nancy in dejection. "Mark'll give me money, but money wont do no good, plague on it! I might 'a' married Jim McGowan, a good-hearted feller, and that fond o' me. But here I am, an' who'll look at me now? W'y, the ugliest gal on Rocky Fork's got a better show'n I have."

Roxy leaned over and whispered again. Nancy listened intently. Then she started a little.

"You wouldn't do that! You dursent do it! You dursent take it yourself!"

Again Roxy whispered to her.

"You don't mean it!" broke out Nancy. "You're a-foolin' weth me! I wont be fooled weth any more!"

But Roxy, intent now on her purpose, laid her right hand on Nancy's left, gently clasped it, and whispered again in her ear.

"Will you kiss the book on that air?" asked the suspicious Nancy, looking Roxy full in the face.

"Yes, to be sure I will. I'll do what I say."

"I'll git the book. You've got to sw'ar to it."

Nancy rose from her seat eagerly, and the knife fell from under her apron upon the hearth. The clatter attracted Roxy's attention, and Nancy turned red.

"I hadn't orter'a' done it," she said, "but I 'lowed may be you was agoin' to do me some harm."

But Roxy could hardly make out that Nancy had concealed the knife as a weapon.

Nancy brought out Mark's Testament. Seeing Roxy shudder, she apologized.

"We haint got no other Bible, an' as this 'ere is his'n, it's jest as good. I don't know jest how to do," she said, puzzled, "but I reckon this'll do. You sw'ar on this book that you'll do what you promised."

"I swear on this book that I'll do what I've promised. So help me God!" Roxy's voice trembled. Nancy held up the Testament, and Roxy kissed it.

After a while, the old woman had her early dinner of pork and cabbage on the table, and pressed Roxy to eat. She could not eat, but she drank a little of Mrs. Kirtley's

sassafras tea, for the sake of peace. The old man had been duly called, by the blowing of a tin horn, and he wondered not a little at the amity between his daughter and Mrs. Bonamy. Nancy was more and more fascinated by Roxy's friendliness. She was hungry now for just such human recognition. Not very capable of moral distinction, she was yet very full of feeling, and there was growing up in her mind a great sense of gratitude to Roxy as her deliverer, —that gratitude which strongly affects even dumb brutes sometimes. Nancy sat by Roxy at the table, urged her with the rude hospitality of the country to eat, and wondered more and more at a magnanimity that was beyond her comprehension. After dinner, though Roxy was in haste to be away, Nancy detained her while she herself put some corn in a pail and fed the clay-bank colt.

At last Roxy told the old woman good-bye, and then held out her hand to Nancy. Nancy took it—held it a moment, while her face twitched and her whole frame trembled. She felt her own humiliation deeply, in her growing worship of Roxy, and she had an almost animal desire to be petted and caressed, greatly intensified since she had felt herself outcast.

"Would you mind—" here she looked down and stammered—"would you mind—kissin' a poor thing like me, jist once, you know?"

In that moment Roxy remembered the words that Whittaker had spoken that morning—"There is no law against your trying to be as forgiving and as good as God;" but for an instant her woman's heart held her back from the guilty girl. A sense of the wrong she herself had endured, rose up in her. But she repeated to herself the words: "To be as forgiving as God," and then folded her arms about Nancy, who wept upon her shoulder—a poor dumb

thing, beaten upon, of tempestuous passions, but susceptible at last to good influence that came to her through her sensibilities—through shame and defeat and forgiveness and deliverance.

The old man Kirtley had perceived dimly that for some reason Roxy Bonamy was to be treated as a friend. So he held the bridle of her horse while she mounted from the fence corner. Then when she was about to ride off Nancy came close to the horse and said:

"I'm a-goin' to send the ole man over to tell Jim McGowan. He's awful mad and I've been expectin' that any day he'd shoot somebody."

"I wish you would," said Roxy.

"You and me 'll always be frien's," said Nance.

"Yes, indeed we will, Nancy." And Roxy, worn with fatigue and excitement, rode away now to the other part of her task. Sometimes during her long ride her heart rebelled when she thought that she had embraced Nancy. But she repeated to herself, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these ye did it unto me." She had often in revival meetings entreated people to "embrace Christ." But even now in her mental and physical depression it dawned upon her that she herself had never before in so full a sense embraced the Christ as when she had taken Nancy into her bosom.

CHAPTER LIII.

ROXY'S RETURN.

After Whittaker's night visit to Mark the latter had been busily engaged in adjusting his affairs that he might leave the country. On that very Thursday morning his brother-in-law Barlow had called, partly to see Mark, chiefly in hope of buying the Bonamy poplars at half price. And all day Friday and Saturday Mark had kept himself busy. It was at night when business cares relaxed that a returning sense of wretchedness came upon him. When Sunday came and his solitude pressed more heavily he sank into extreme dejection. A young and ambitious man lives in his future, a self-indulgent man in his present. Mark's future had been suddenly annihilated and his imagination was not yet able to discern a new one; his present was too uncomfortable to be dwelt upon. It was in this mood of restless dejection that he started out after night-fall on Sunday to walk through by-ways and back streets. The more he walked the more he felt himself a wanderer shut out from the world about him. Of course, he might have known that in time the village would cease to concern itself about him, even if he continued to live in the town. But the wretchedness of his present conspicuousness and exclusion bore too heavily for him to forecast possibilities of human forgetfulness. People were gathering in the churches, but he could not enter one of them without being stared at as the Esau who had sold his birthright. It was with such melancholy reflec-

tions as these that he came in sight of Adams's old-fashioned hewed log house, standing in the midst of its garden-plot in a lonesome part of the village. A sudden desire to see Roxy seized him. A sudden and sharp remembrance of the welcome she used to give him overcame all his caution, and he resolved to see her once again. The honeysuckles were growing over the window as they had grown three years ago. Some fascination of memory made him choose that front window. He looked eagerly in at the window—she was before him, listless and heartbroken. And though remorse smote him sore he could not withdraw his eyes, but pressed his face closer and closer to the window that he might get a clearer view of her,—it was to be the last. He longed inexpressibly and blindly for some recognition or forgiveness. At last she turned full toward him and gave a shriek of fright and surprise, and fell fainting to the floor. Aroused now, Mark had bounded over the fence and hurried homeward like a fugitive. He was smitten with the idea that Roxy had an utter horror of him. All his old remorse revived and again suicide looked tempting to him. Sometimes the suicidal mania moved him toward a life of reckless intemperance and moral self-destruction. When morning came he had little heart for business arrangements. He could not get rid of Roxy's terrified look and her cry when she saw him the night before. As the day wore on he wavered between suicide, intemperance, and a sudden absconding from Luzerne and all the associations it held with his old life. In this conflict of impulses he resolved at any rate to go away from the house never to come back. He put on his hat and went out toward the gate, not turning to get a last glimpse of the old home now grown so hateful to him.

Bob, when he had given Roxy the horse that morning, had been in some doubt whether it were better to tell Mr. Bonamy or not. White folkses quar'ls waz more'n he could git de hang of, 'peared like. And of course he could not know whether or not Mark Bonamy would censure him for letting Roxy have the clay-bank colt. But Bob had noticed with apprehension Bonamy's uneasiness during the night, and had kept a watch on him the next day. His great dread was that Mark should go away and so fail to see Roxy when she should bring Dick home in the evening. He set great store by this visit. Something in Mark's manner aroused his suspicions, and when about mid-day he saw him going out of the gate in haste Bob ran after him calling out:

"I say, sah, Mass' Mauk, I wants to say sumpin to ye."

Mark stopped impatiently. What did he care about giving Bob directions in regard to planting?

"I see Miss Roxy dis mo'nin', sah."

"Oh, you did!" Mark was attentive now.

"Yes, sah, and she borryed Dick from me. I couldn't say she shouldn't have de clay-bank colt, ye know."

"She took Dick, did she?" asked Mark, with eagerness

"Yes, sah, but she said she'd fotch him he'se'f 'long 'bout dis evenin' some time. I didn't know whedder ye'd want to be heah or not when she comes."

"Of course I want to be here," and Mark went back again into the house.

For hours he walked up and down the front porch, trying to guess what use Roxy could make of the horse; where she could have gone, why she was coming to see him, and what it all meant. From time to time he called Bob and questioned him about the whole transaction. But it was still a mystery to him.

At last about four o'clock he saw across the tops of the vines of the vineyard, a woman riding toward the front gate. When he was sure that it was Roxy, he trembled from head to foot, and retreated inside of the house, sending Bob to open the gate.

When Roxy rode up to the horse-block he went out himself, silently holding the horse while she as silently dismounted. Then giving the reins to Bob he stretched a trembling hand to Roxy standing there on the block and said, with eyes downcast:

"May I help you down?"

Roxy gave him her hand and he assisted her to the ground and walked a little way behind her to the porch. He did not invite her in but left her free to go where she would in her own house, if she chose to make it hers. Roxy went into the sitting-room and sat down in the rocking chair that Mark set for her, while Mark took a chair on the other side of the room.

"I have come back, Mark," she said, with effort.

Mark sat stock-still. He was shaken by contrary emotions. He put his head down between his hands and sat thus in grief and shame.

"Have you come back to your house to stay?"

"No. I've not come back to my house. I've come back to my husband. I'm going to stay if you will let me."

"O God!" said Mark. But he said no more.

Roxy could see the shaking of his whole frame. After a while she spoke again.

"You haven't told me whether I am to stay or to go."

"I'm not fit to have you stay. You know that, Roxy. I ought to have killed myself long ago. If you will only stay here I will go. I'm not fit to stay with you."

"What should I stay for, if you go. I've not come back

to the house, I tell you. I've come back to you. If you go I will go, if you stay I will stay—unless you tell me you don't want me."

"You know, Roxy, that I'm likely to be prosecuted by the Kirtleys." Mark said this after a long time. "How can I involve you in any way with myself while such a prosecution is pending?"

"But I've been to see Nancy Kirtley to-day and I've had a long talk with her and I've arranged the whole matter with her. She is satisfied and glad to have things as I've fixed them, and there'll be no prosecution."

"You've been to Kirtley's!" Mark raised himself up and looked full in her face. "You went to see that creature that plotted in cold blood to bring this harm on you? And all for my sake!"

"No, not *all* for your sake. Partly for your sake, partly for Nancy's sake, partly for my own sake; for this is an affair that can't be settled by halves. I had to settle it on all sides, you know. Besides," Roxy spoke rapidly, "I am to blame, too, you must remember. And now I've set myself to see what good can come out of this evil for all of us."

"What a woman you are! There's no man in the world fit to be your husband. Of all men I'm not." And he leaned his head upon a table and was silent.

Then, after awhile, he said: "What kind of a settlement did you make with Nancy?"

"It's not best to discuss that now, Mark. Can't you leave that to me?"

"I will leave everything to you."

"Now, Mark, the whole matter is arranged, if you can be forgiving."

"I forgive?"

"Yes, you must forgive me for being so severe with you as to help the temptation rather than to help you."

"Don't say that again. If you talk about my forgiving you, you'll drive me mad."

"You must forgive Nancy, then."

"I can forgive her all I have suffered easily enough, for that is about even, I'm afraid. But it's awful hard to think of her plotting against you, of all women in the world. But then, what's the use of my talking that way? I'm not the one who has a right to hold any grudge against any sinner in God's world. I could forgive the Devil for being the Devil after what I've been through."

"But you must forgive yourself. You and I can't build up our life together again if you keep in this mood. You must hope for the best, or it will be only a wretched kind of living we shall have. I've thought it all over to-day. I want you to try to forgive yourself for my sake."

Mark made no reply.

"Here, I've been sitting a good while, my husband, with my bonnet on, and you haven't given me a kiss or any other welcome home again. Don't you love me, Mark?"

After a pause Mark answered slowly:

"No, Roxy, I'm not fit to say I love you, but God knows I worship you. I could get down on my knees to you. I would like to be your slave."

"But I don't want that," said Roxy, almost impatiently. "Unless you can forgive yourself enough to be something more than that, I'd just as well not have come." Roxy rose up, and came and stood on the side of the table opposite to Mark. With his head still bowed upon the table, he reached out his hand and took hold of the tips of her fingers, and, drawing them to him, kissed them over and over again.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE CLOUDS RETURN AFTER THE RAIN.

Just at this moment Bob, who was eager to do all in his power to facilitate a reconciliation, came and stood in the door.

"I 'spects likely you haint had no dinnah to-day, Miss Roxy. 'Pears like 's if you'd had a mighty pow'ful long ride. I's jist got some suppah on de table, ma'am, ef you'll come and git some."

Mark started up at these words of Bob and said:

"Come, Roxy, you are faint. How pale you are!" at the same time leading her, as he held yet the tips of her fingers, toward the supper-table which sat invitingly on the back porch. But his thoughtfulness and Bob's ministration had come late. The fatigue of the day, added to Roxy's exhaustion from the days and nights of trouble that had preceded, were too much for her strength. Now that her hard ride was over and her last terrible task of reconciliation accomplished, the stimulus that upheld her was removed; her head swam, she grew faint and Mark caught her insensible in his arms. For one minute he stood stunned with grief and surprise, a statue of despair, holding what seemed to him the lifeless form of the wife he had slain.

"On de bed, Mass' Mark,—on de bed, sah. She on'y fainted, sah."

Recovering himself a little, Bonamy laid her upon the

bed and set to work desperately to restore her. As soon as Roxy returned to consciousness she showed signs of fever and delirium. Mark sent the negro for the doctor, while he stood watching alone with his wife.

The doctor came and, soon after, Twonnet and Jemima. But Bonamy would allow none of them to minister to Roxy During the week that followed, he stood over and about her bed, filled with a remorse that nothing he could do served to ameliorate. He gave Roxy with his own hands her food and medicine; no other was allowed to hand her so much as a spoonful of water. He rejected offers of relief with so much fierceness that after a while all thought of any one taking his place was given up. Twonnet and Jemima and Rachel Adams and Amanda Barlow would sometimes stand in a row, helpless spectators, at the foot of the bed, with the glowering Adams in the background, while Mark alone administered to Roxy's wants. Even when the hands of two were necessary he accepted help with reluctance.

As for sleep, he scarcely had any in seven days and nights. Yielding to entreaties, he threw himself two or three times on the hard seat of a settee in the room and slumbered, awaking, however, at the slightest sound that Roxy made. He scarcely ate at all. He was a strange sight, standing there with wan visage, sunken eyes and unkempt hair, turning fiercely upon every one who proposed that he should rest, utterly unwearying in his care of Roxy. No mother could have been more tender, no devotee more worshipful than he was in his treatment of the sufferer. The physical penance of his awful days and nights of watching relieved the torture of his mind and was the only thing that could have kept him alive and sane—if indeed he were sane! Twonnet watched him

sometimes in his wild devotion and wondered whether he were quite himself or not. He had neither eyes nor ears for anybody else than Roxy. All the force of his intense and impulsive nature drove him madly to his pathetic task.

Worst of all, Roxy talked a great deal in her delirium. She went over and over every stage of the great trouble. Now she was defiantly angry at Nancy Kirtley, now she was refusing to wear this or that article of apparel.

"I will not wear anything that was bought with *his* money," she would cry, and then Mark, standing in a state of fascination like a man listening to his own doom, would shake and shudder in a kind of horror.

"Yes, I will kiss you, poor girl," Roxy would say. "You tried to kill me. You stabbed me in my heart. But there's Jesus Christ standing there by you. Poor wicked Nancy! Come, I'll forgive you. I'll kiss you. I must. But—oh—what a—a sinner you are! It's hard, so hard."

Then she would slumber awhile and break out with:

"Oh, that's Mark! He's looking in the window. Great black lines under his eyes! Oh, what a face! Go 'way, I can't stand it! Poor fellow! Poor fellow! I'm so sorry for him! Get out of my way! Let go of me! I'm going back to Mark! I'm going to Mark! Here I am, I've come back, Mark! Here I am! Here I am! I'm going to stay—to stay—to stay till I die! Why don't you kiss me, Mark, and say you're glad? Oh, dear, I feel so tired."

When Roxy talked in this way, Mark would get down on his knees and bury his face in the bedclothes. But while all the rest wept he did not shed a tear.

From two people he would take a little secondary help

sometimes. Bobo stood by him a great deal of the time. To make Bobo his companion seemed in some way a sort of propitiation. He had always felt a dislike to the lad, and now Bobo should help him. It would please Roxy. Bobo would bring him the water or the medicine. And when his sister Janet, hearing of Roxy's sickness, came back he permitted her to assist him a little.

If anybody hinted a fatal result of the sickness Mark turned on them with the glare of a savage. Even from the doctor he would not hear any unfavorable prognosis. He was resolved that she should get well. He was resolved that the symptoms were ever those of improvement. And all that looked on agreed that if Roxy died Mark might die also.

At last the fever burnt itself out. The eyes, so full of an unwholesome brightness, lost their luster and were dull. The end seemed not far off. The doctor said that the strength of the patient was too far gone for her to recover. It fell to Whittaker to tell her that she had not long to live.

"Mark," she said, in a voice so faint that it was hardly audible.

Mark heard her where he knelt by the bed-foot, and came round by her, wan, wild, and desperate.

"Good-bye!" and Roxy smiled faintly. "Good-bye! poor Mark,—good-bye!"

But Mark said nothing. He stood transfixed in a speechless and tearless despair.

Roxy essayed to say good-bye again, and sank into a swoon. Mark saw it and groaned.

"She has gone!" he cried, and turning round, he went slowly out of the room, to the porch. It was growing dark. He paused awhile, and then rushed from the house toward

the river. He walked rapidly along the pebbly shore. Mile after mile he traveled in a blind desperation, saying to himself, "I ought to die for that! I ought to die for that!" But whenever the suicidal impulse seized him and he felt driven to rush into the water, he was restrained by some thought that Roxy, up there whither she had gone, would perhaps be rendered unhappy by such an act. Then he would say "I'd better serve out my time. I must serve out my time." Some thought that he was doomed to self-punishment had burnt itself into his half-crazed brain.

About nine or ten o'clock, he reached Craig's Landing. Here he sat down upon a log under the bank. The packet-boat, called "Lady Pike," was coming down the river. With a dazed sort of feeling, Mark sat there bareheaded, for he had brought no hat, and watched the steamer's approach. She came up to the landing, and the roustabouts, aided by much swearing from the mate, put ashore the little stock of goods purchased in Cincinnati by the "storekeeper" in the back settlement known as Braytown. When the last article of all, a keg of New Orleans molasses, had been landed, and the roustabouts were running back up the "walk-plank," Mark, obeying a sudden impulse, ran after them, saying to himself, "I'll serve out my time." The second clerk, seeing a bareheaded man coming aboard, demanded whether he had anything to pay his passage with or not. Bonamy took a half dollar from his pocket, and with it paid for a deck passage to Louisville.

When the boat was slowly pushing out from the shore, Mark ran forward, and, recognizing by the light of the boat's torch Bill McKay, the stalwart man who lived near the landing, called out, "Bill! when you go to town, tell

my folks I'm coming back as soon as I've served out my time." But the light was not on Bonamy's face, and Bill could only see that it was a bareheaded and crazy-looking man who had called to him.

As the boat moved away, Mark went aft, and climbed up on a pile of sacks of shelled corn, and in the midst of the rude and regular clatter of the boat's engines and the hissing of the steam-pipes, he sank exhausted at last into a troubled slumber.

CHAPTER LV.

SERVING OMPHALE.

So INTENT were the rest on the condition of the sufferer, that it was not until the night was half gone, and their hope of Roxy's living had slowly revived, that the long-continued absence of Bonamy excited alarm. A search of the farm was instituted, and when morning came, inquiries were made about the village, and plans were even talked of for dragging the river in search of the body, on the supposition that he had drowned himself. But Bill McKay, full of curiosity about the mysterious bareheaded man who had promised in this wild fashion to return "when he had served out his time," resorted early to town, that he might find out about him. Bill's story and Mark's disappearance were soon fitted together, and it was generally agreed that Bonamy had "gone crazy." A man was sent to Louisville to search for him, but he was not tracked farther than his landing from the "Lady Pike" in the morning; for Bonamy's mental aberration had settled down into a mania for self-punishment. He had gone to Louisville, partly because the Louisville boat happened to come along at the moment, and partly because the Indiana state-prison was at Jeffersonville, on the opposite bank of the river from that city. But when his wits were cleared a little by the sleep of the night, he remembered that however guilty he might be, there was no place for an unconvicted criminal in the penitentiary

Already the mania was taking a milder form, and he contented himself, after having bought a rough hat at a Jew's shop in Louisville, with walking along a canal bank through Shippingsport to the wretched village known in that day as Portland, where two or three boats from the lower country were lying. He succeeded in hiring himself out to the mate of the "Sultana" as a deck-hand, a term applied then to the men who are now called roustabouts, or, in strict steamboat-men's parlance, "roosters." He could not have chosen a more severe punishment, outside of the penitentiary, for the roustabout, as the lowest man in the steamboat hierarchy, was subject to the kicks and cuffs of everybody, from the captain down to the third mate. But there was something of dignity in Bonamy's speech and manner that procured him much immunity from the insults heaped upon his fellows, while his rugged frame and great physical strength made him the equal of the rudest of his companions in carrying sacks of corn and coffee, or in rolling off sugar hogsheads. Perhaps, also, his physical strength and the fire in his eye had something to do with the mate's unwonted respect for him. Doubtless the hard work was the best cure for his brain. The weariness of lifting and carrying made him sleep, and the sleep brought a gradual mental recuperation. By the time the "Sultana" had reached Evansville, he began to wonder at his own abruptness in leaving Luzerne, without even waiting till Roxy's funeral was over, and he began to reflect that there would be search made for him. So he posted a note to his brother-in-law, in which he simply said: "I'm serving out my time. I'll come home when I'm through." This idea of penal servitude for a definite time was fixed in his mind.

The letter did not reach Luzerne until Roxy was far on

her way to recovery and had been informed of all the incidents of her sickness and of Mark's departure. Letters were immediately sent to Evansville, but of course no trace could be found of Bonamy. Advertisements were inserted in Louisville papers but without avail. There were neither telegraphs nor railroads. But Roxy, when she recovered, made use of the best means within her reach. Since the whole trade of the village by flat-boat was with the "lower country," she wrote letters to every flat-boat pilot and flat-boat hand whose address she could get at every point up and down the Mississippi, asking them to keep a lookout for Mark. There were also a certain number of old inhabitants of the village who were doing business in New Orleans, and to these Roxy sent word. That he was serving on flat-boat or raft, or on the deck of a steamboat, came to be the general impression. And when a second letter came from Memphis, saying: "The work is hard, but I can stand it till my time is out," there seemed no doubt that he was on a steamboat; the time from Evansville to Memphis was too quick for any other mode of travel. In her eagerness to find him, Roxy even visited the coal-boats and salt-boats that touched the village landing and had interviews also with the boatmen who came ashore in skiffs for supplies, giving them a careful description of Mark's person.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE GABLE WINDOW.

WHITTAKER had long ceased to feel the old temptation to think too much about Roxy, not only because he had found it to be improper and unprofitable, but because of changes in his own mode of thinking. Roxy's heroism had made her more an object of admiration to him. But a man does not always love most what he admires. Such a man as Whittaker—serious, earnest, scrupulous—may worship the heroic, but he does not readily love a heroine. As a heroine *in esse*, Roxy seemed to him too great to be loved. She was not a woman to be petted or cherished, she was a woman born to suffer and to achieve. He could have written a book about her, but he would not have written a love-letter to a woman of such a mold. He no longer regretted that she had not loved him. One who has a spice of the heroic does not mate well with heroism. As Whittaker stood now and then in Roxy's sick-room he felt himself in the shrine of a saint. But he did not want to live always in a temple. And dimly he came to understand that Roxy could not have been for him.

He understood this more from his curious liking for Twonnet which grew in spite of him. Not that he had distinctly admitted to himself that he loved the lively Swiss girl. How could he, a scholar, love a girl who couldn't get her grammar lesson and who couldn't understand what in the world a square root might be? How dared he, a minister, love a girl so entirely volatile as

Twonnet? And yet this very volatility was a great delight to him. Twonnet's merry laugh was to his prevailing mood like a field of green wheat in the bleak winter, or a burst of sunlight on a somber day.

"What a girl she is!" Whittaker would say as he remembered how she had pelted him that day when she leaned out of the garret window, and how she had rebuked him from behind her grandmother's spectacles. But all the time he felt like a truant. Thoughts of Twonnet seemed wrong to him, and her merry face invaded his imagination even in his prayers.

Sometimes he resolved that he would not think about Twonnet. It was hardly safe for a man to allow his mind to dwell so much on a person whom he must not love. But a forbidding resolution is worst of all. For by way of strengthening his resolve he would recall reasons for not thinking of Twonnet. He had to think about her to get arguments for not thinking about her. She was too light. There was that day in the garden, for instance, when she stood, playfully, tray in hand, and sang with mock pathos:

> "I've come across the sea
> From Swissland a stranger,
> For a brother dear to me
> From Swissland a ranger."

But just here his stern logic stopped and he fell into a reverie. The logic had evoked the image of Twonnet, and his heart stood and looked at her there. He saw the dark curls, the clear brown eyes, the ruddy brunette cheeks full of laughter, the red lips singing in such half-pathetic impersonation:

> "A little toy, a little toy
> Of poor Rose of Luzerne."

Somehow this struggle did not put out the flame—fanning never does put out fire. The more he wouldn't think the more he did.

It was while Roxy was at the worst that Mr. Highbury, having noticed the increase of the congregation for two Sundays, and having concluded that Whittaker would not be easily removed, decided to make friends, and at the same time magnify his office of elder. So, taking with him his fellow elder,—a dapper little man, cipher to Highbury's unit,—he called on Whittaker, and, after much preliminary parley, advised him to marry. To which view Mr. Wingate, the minor elder, cordially assented. He thought so, too.

"But whom shall I marry?" said Whittaker, puzzled.

"Well," said Highbury, "you ought to marry a church-member."

Mr. Wingate said he thought so by all means.

"And a person of seriousness and piety, one who can visit the sick, and get up female prayer-meetings and sewing circles," said Highbury.

"To be sure," said Wingate. "That is very important—the seriousness and piety and the sewing circles especially."

"I think," said Highbury, "that a minister's wife should not talk too much. She ought to be quiet and grave."

"Grave by all means," coincided the sprightly but deferential Mr. Wingate.

"A minister's usefulness, you know, depends so much on his wife. She ought to be a helpmate."

"You never said anything truer than that, Mr. Highbury," echoed the earnest Wingate. "A minister's usefulness, you know, is a most useful and important thing, Mr. Whittaker." Mr. Wingate here subsided into placidity,

with a consciousness that he had made one original observation.

Mr. Whittaker very readily promised to consider the advice of his elders. And after that he walked up and down the porch, and tried to think. But he could not think of anybody but Twonnet. Her he observed closely, trying to imagine that there was more seriousness about her than he thought. And, indeed, she was serious enough. Here was Roxy's illness to make her solemn. And there came a consciousness that Whittaker was observing her, which produced a constraint and reserve he had never seen in her before. In proportion to his interest in her, she showed a coldness toward him. A certain fear that she had been too free, and a dread of revealing herself produced self-constraint that made her seem other than she was.

When Whittaker's school was out, on the Friday afternoon following Mark's departure on Monday evening, he walked home, thinking more intently of Twonnet than ever before. It was now four or five days since the members of his church session had bidden him to marry. But Twonnet certainly was not the kind of person Mr. Highbury had in mind when he described the stock ideal of a parson's wife. Grave in demeanor she was not. Whittaker laughed to think of her presiding over a "female prayer-meeting." She could not always keep a serious face in meeting. He remembered how she had mimicked the elder at the time of his remonstrance about Roxy. Then he said in his thoughts: "I wish she were as solemn as she ought to be to be a minister's wife." But Whittaker would not have loved her half so well, if she had been a minister's wife of the dried sort. It was the very joyousness and child-likeness of her heart that was such a fountain of delight to him.

When the minister in this mood reached the gate of the Lefaure yard, he felt like a school-boy deciding on truancy. He'd a mind to try for Twonnet anyhow, and let the consequences come. But though he did not fear the elders, he feared his own conscience, for he remembered, as Wingate expressed it, that "a minister's usefulness was a most useful and important thing." And then, too, he dreaded Twonnet's ridicule. She had made all the young men of her acquaintance afraid of her by her remorseless laughing at their foibles, and Whittaker feared that he would be made a fool of, if he made love to her.

He found Twonnet the only occupant of the house beside himself. The children were gathering periwinkle shells on the river shore, Mrs. Lefaure was away, and Twonnet had come home from Roxy's to take charge of the house.

Whittaker's first inquiry was about Roxy, and about Roxy Twonnet could talk freely with him, provided he did not look at her scrutinizingly, as had been his habit of late. About Roxy they talked, how rapidly she was convalescing, where Mark had gone, whether he would ever come back, and what effect his leaving would have on Roxy.

Twonnet sat in a rocking-chair on the porch, sewing, and Whittaker had seated himself on the edge of the porch. After awhile the conversation lagged, because Whittaker had fallen again to looking closely and searchingly at his companion. She, on her part, had immediately ceased to talk. It made her cheeks warm to be looked at in that fashion. But Whittaker presently broke out in half soliloquy, repeating three lines from Petrarch. His Italian studies had been revived since he was think-

ing of Twonnet by a new interest in Petrarch. Now he came out with:

> "O aspettata in ciel beata e bella
> Anima, che di nostra umanitade
> Vestita vai, non come l'altre carca!"

"What does that mean?" asked Twonnet.

"Those lines have been in my head for a week," said Whittaker. "I couldn't keep from applying them to Roxy, while she was so sick. 'O looked-for in heaven, thou blessed and beautiful soul, clothed with our humanity, in a way not like the rest of us!' That is not quite it either, but that is what it seemed to me to be when I saw Roxy so sick. She is a most wonderful woman."

Why did Twonnet sigh and look vexed? Why did it always make her glad to hear anybody praise Roxy excepting Whittaker? The old jealous feeling arose again, and she said to herself, "He is always praising Roxy. He can't see anybody but Roxy." Finding tears of vexation rising in her eyes, she hastily left the porch.

Whittaker sat a long time waiting for her return, with an undefined sense of having somehow offended her, and that kind of wretchedness which a lover always feels at recognizing the fact that a man, even a lover, has but a blundering knowledge of a woman's heart. After awhile, despairing of Twonnet's return, he got up and went to his own room. But he became more and more uneasy. The more he thought that he had wounded her, the more was he intent on apology. Would she never come back to the porch? After awhile, he heard the voices of her mother and the children in the hall, and his opportunity for explanation was gone. He sat down at the window under the gable, and tried to guess why she seemed so offended, but

he succeeded no better than men usually do in such a case. Remembering the time when the girl had pelted him with paper balls, he looked up toward the garret window and saw her fingers clasped around the window-sill. A powerful impulse seized him.

"Twonnet!" he cried, with that joy of daring which a cautious man feels when he has thrown the despotic cautiousness to the whales.

She answered with a simple "Sir?" that is *de rigueur* in the politeness of the country, but she did not look out. It was an old boyish trait of Whittaker's when playing a game, to make the most aggressive movements, to carry everything at the last by a daring *tour de force*, which always surprised those who knew his habitual caution. Now he was piqued by Twonnet's reserve, and he was carried away by the old venturesomeness.

"I'm coming up there, Twonnet."

He waited a moment. The hand was withdrawn from the sill, but there was no word forbidding him. He went directly to the attic stair, which he had never ascended before. When he got to the top, he found the garret wholly unfurnished, except by a few decrepit chairs and other invalids, put away for storage. But at the end where Twonnet kept her doll, and where she had surreptitiously held on to her childhood long after she was too nearly grown up to confess to childish amusements, there were gathered two cracked chairs, a piece of rag-carpet, a piece of an old looking-glass on a box turned upside down for a bureau, a doll's bed, and other junk and toys. Of late, Twonnet had mostly given up the place to her younger sisters, but she still resorted to this gable window when she was in trouble. Whittaker found her in the midst of this strange *ameublement*, sitting on the floor against the light, which

just touched with a rim of brightness her brown head—as fine a Rembrandt piece as one would wish to see. She did not say a single word as he approached, stooping under the rafters, but when he came close enough he saw that she had been crying. Behold another great mystery! Why should a woman cry? Glad or sorry, pleased or vexed, loving or hating, why has a woman always to resort to this one escape for all emotion?

When Whittaker essayed to sit down on one of the chairs, he saw something of the old familiar twinkle in her eyes, and when the hypocritical chair gave way and precipitated him to the floor, he understood the meaning of her smile.

"It's too bad, Mr. Whittaker," she said, in the midst of her laughter. "I ought to have told you, but it's so funny to see you fall over."

A little disconcerted, Whittaker picked himself up, and then gently pitched the chair into a corner, inwardly saying that she had set it there, or at least left it there, on purpose for him. Then he, too, tried to sit down on the floor, cutting a very awkward figure, as a man not educated to the tailor's trade is sure to do in such an attempt. His final adjustment of himself brought him at last into a half-kneeling attitude, before her. But if his physical position was an awkward one, his mental posture was even more so. He had brought himself face to face with a merry, mischievous girl, who was a shrewd and prudent woman besides, and who had been his confidant in a former love affair three years before. He had, so far as deliberation was concerned, made up his mind to nothing. He only knew that he loved this girl, good as she was mischievous, and that she was making game of him, having completely upset his dignity by a broken-legged chair, left in cold

blood as a trap for him. He had nothing to say. But he must say something. Naturally, under the circumstances, he began at the wrong end. After gaining time by trying to talk about the arrangements of her play-house, he said:

"Mr. Highbury and Mr. Wingate were here on Monday, to advise me to get married. What do you think of that?"

"That would do very well, if Roxy were not married yet," said Twonnet, half poutingly taking the old doll into her lap, and pretending to have great difficulty in adjusting a pin in its clothes. By this means she let her curls fall down around her face, and screened herself a little from Whittaker's too intent gaze.

"Roxy!" said Whittaker. "I shouldn't marry Roxy if she were Roxy Adams yet."

"Why, you said just awhile ago that she was 'looked-for in heaven,' and was a 'blessed and beautiful soul.'"

"So I did. But a man can't love an angel, however much he may admire her. There is no rest to Roxy's goodness."

Twonnet was going to tell him that he was just as good himself, but she didn't. What she did say was that this doll had got its broken nose by falling out of this very window six years ago.

"Highbury and Wingate gave me a recipe for the compounding of a parson's wife," he said. "She was to be half angel and half sawdust."

Twonnet laughed outright at this, and Whittaker was a little shocked at himself; but he had cut loose from his usual decorum of speech and action; and he enjoyed talking in what seemed to him a reckless and abandoned way.

"For my part, I think you would make the best wife I know," he said, awkwardly.

"Yes," said she, looking up. "Think of me leading a prayer-meeting. I'd set a broken-legged chair for old Mother Tartrum, and I'd give Mrs. Highbury a rocking chair with one rocker off. See how solemn I can be." And Twonnet drew her face into a queer pucker, and said, in a dry, hard voice, "Sing the twenty-first psalm, second part." Whittaker was just about to remonstrate with her for her light treatment of sacred things, when the comical pucker on her face gave way, and she began to cry.

He did not know what to say to anybody crying. So he waited until she leaned her head on her hand and grew more quiet. Then he spoke again, this time vehemently.

"I don't want a wife for a church. I don't ask you to marry the female prayer-meeting or the sewing circle. I am a man, if I am a minister. I don't love you as a parson. I love you, Antoinette Lefaure, and I want to know if you can love, not a parson, but me, Charles Whittaker?"

Twonnet did not speak, or raise her head. After a while, Whittaker timidly took hold of her hand. He could not bear to see her cry, so presently he took her handkerchief from her lap and wiped her eyes. Then she smiled a little.

"Is it all right, Twonnet?" he said, trying to look in her eyes, which she turned away.

"Mr. Whittaker," she said, with a trembling voice, "my mother's calling me. I'll have to get you to let go of my hand, if you please."

Whittaker relaxed his grasp. The mother was still calling "Antoinette!" but Twonnet did not seem in a great hurry to go. Whittaker leaned forward, took her

face between his hands, and kissed her on the cheek, as he might have kissed a child. And then Twonnet cried again. And then he had to wipe away the tears, and kiss her again to comfort her.

"Qu'avez vous? What have you been crying about?" asked her mother, when she came down-stairs.

"Mr. Whittaker's been talking to me. He's been telling me all about a love affair of his."

"What a foolish child you are to cry over Mr. Whittaker's love affairs!"

"I couldn't help it," said Twonnet, meekly.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE STEAMBOAT EXPLOSION.

Roxy, as she rapidly recovered, found herself the principal topic of discussion in the town. It was clearly wrong, in the opinion of some of the strictest people, for her to return to her husband. It was contrary to Scripture, or what is of more consequence than Scripture, to wit, ingenious inferences from Scripture. Logical inferences are like precious stones, valuable in proportion to the distance from which they are fetched and the difficulty one has in getting at them. The great strainers agreed also with the camel-swallowers that it was a violation of law for Roxy to buy off Nancy's prosecution as she must have done. It was compounding a felony and protecting a man that deserved to go to penitentiary.

And then there were those of a Rosa Matilda turn of mind who talked loudly about the sacredness of the romantic sentiments that had somehow been outraged in Roxy's forgiveness. And there were a few who approved in a cynical fashion. Roxy was no fool. A whole loaf was better than a half, and when she came to think of it she must have seen that it was better to go back. But the greater number of people have a romantic love for heroism, all the more that they are quite incapable of emulating it. Those who heartily admired her course soon had things all their own way.

But one day, as the Fourth of July drew on and the air

was made lively by fire-crackers, the whole town was thrown into consternation and excitement by the intelligence that Roxy had taken a step more startling than her return to her husband. Indeed nothing so awful had ever been heard. Some people thought Roxy's actions a disgrace to the Christian religion, an outrage on civilization, and what was worse, a shock to good society. For people whose minds act but slowly and in grooves, there is small distinction between an action that is "out of the common run" and an act that is essentially immoral. They only knew that Roxy had surprised them, this time beyond endurance.

She had gone to Kirtley's cabin and taken Nancy's child.

Mrs. Tartrum issued extras on the subject every hour giving all the details down to the date of going to press. She even interviewed Roxy. She had actually seen the baby with her own eyes!

Among the items in Mrs. Tartrum's budget was the announcement that Mrs. Amanda Barlow was dreadfully afflicted. She was mortified beyond all expression. She had a right to be, poor thing! To have the family disgraced right under her nose and eyes in that way was too much for a Christian woman to stand. And even Janet had left Roxy. She loved Roxy, but a sensitive young girl reared in boarding school,—could she live in a house with such a child without contamination? True she had read, with the approval of her teacher, "The Vicar of Wakefield," and Walter Scott's novels, and surreptitiously, she had read some older novels than Scott's; but to read of such things in novels is quite another thing to enduring them in one's own family. Even Roxy's new hired girl, not to be behind Janet in delicacy, sought another place; but the loyal Jemima notified Mrs. Rachel that she was going to live

with Roxy. Jemima had an innate spirit of opposition to shams, and this popular spasm of virtue aroused all the rude chivalry of her nature. She 'lowed they was only one rale downright Christian in creation and that was Roxy. Ez fer the Pharisees an' the Phylacterees that didn't like a poor innercent little creetur that hadn't done no harm itself, it was her opinion if the gates of New Jerusalem ever opened fer sich folks the hinges would squeak and screech awfully. Roxy had married fer better an' fer wuss and when wuss come thicker and faster and more of it, she took the wuss and done what she could with it.

About this time, however, the town was diverted from its discussion of the merits of Roxy's action and from speculation about the chance of Mark's returning, by the awful intelligence of a steamboat explosion, but a few miles away. The "Red Rock," an opposition packet-boat, trying to keep ahead of the "Lady Pike" of the regular line, had put on a full head of steam and in making a landing on the Kentucky side had been blown in-shore by the wind. The engineer was quite unwilling to allow any of the steam to escape;—it had been made by a prodigious expenditure of tar and soap-fat and other inflammables thrown into the furnaces. In vain the pilot tried to back out, the wind drove the stern of the boat ashore, in vain he tried to run ahead, the steamer had as yet no steerage way and the bow lay flat against the sandy bottom. At last poles and spars were resorted to, the steam still carefully hoarded. The passengers stood on the guard, a young Baptist minister, who with his bride had just come aboard, stood half-way up the stairs waving his handkerchief to the friends on shore, when in an instant the boat flew into a thousand pieces. People were hurled into the air, dropped into the water, on the bank,

everywhere. They were scalded, drowned, destroyed, torn to atoms. It was told that a piece of the boiler crossed the river, and cut down a black locust-tree, six inches in diameter. The first clerk went into the air, fell feet foremost into deep water, and swam ashore. The bar-keeper alighted on the inverted roof of his bar, away in the stream, and was saved. The young Baptist minister and his wife were never found. A mile away from the place of explosion, in a tree-top, there was found a coat-collar, which his friends thought belonged to him.

As all this happened but four miles below the town, Luzerne was thrown into a state of agitation such as only a village can know. Many in the village had friends and acquaintances on the boat. The passengers least hurt were brought to Luzerne to be cared for. The firemen, standing near the boilers, were all killed, and but one of the roustabouts was saved. This roustabout, Bob Olcott, was laid, bruised and maimed, in the village hotel. In a few days he was able to sit in the bar-room and regale the stock company of loafers with a full account of what he saw, and heard, and felt of the explosion, though in fact he knew nothing about it until he found himself lying, bruised and stunned, in the sand of the shore, some minutes after the boilers had burst. But as the story grew in wonderfulness, many resorted to the bar-room to talk with "the feller that had been blowed up." And as nearly every stranger who came felt bound to "stand treat" after the story was ended, the roustabout did not take especial pains to keep it strictly limited to actual observations of his own. In truth, Bob Olcott embroidered the account of the explosion of the "Red Rock" off Craig's Bar with various incidents, real and imaginary, taken from other explosions in the great river system of the West,

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which traditional stories he had picked up from his fellow-roustabouts when they lay resting on coils of rope, and piles of barrels, and sacks of coffee, whiling away the time between landings and wood-yards with pleasant accounts of disasters and assassinations.

Bob did not lie from any purpose; it was no more than an act of good-fellowship and kindness for him to satisfy the craving of his audience. They would have gone away disappointed if Olcott had told them that when the explosion took place, he was sitting with his feet dangling over the guard, just in front of the cook-house, and that he did not know anything more until he came to himself in the sand-pile, full of aches and bruises. No good-hearted fellow could stick to the barren truth under such circumstances. The temptation appealed to Bob's better nature and he kept on remembering things. Far be it from me to reprehend so generous a trait! Bob Olcott belonged to my own profession. He was a novelist, in his way, and his tales had a great run. Mother Tartrum interviewed him every day,—she was the News Company,—and she handed over his stories in job lots to the small dealers, who retailed them on every street corner and over all partition fences. There were skeptics who sat on salt-barrels and store-boxes in the shade of brick walls, and shook their heads over these stories. They knew better; the thing didn't hang together. But I shall not take their side of the question. These are the critics. They were to Bob Olcott what the young fellows who write book notices are to the rest of us. Down with the people who pick a story to pieces as a botanist does a lily! Long live those sympathetic readers who enjoy a tale in simplicity. Did not Washington Irving declare that he never doubted anything that he found pleasant to believe?

One day Olcott, whose story increased in length, and breadth, and thickness, as he regained his physical strength, noticed that, as the steamboat explosion acquired staleness by the lapse of a week of time and by incessant repetition and discussion, there was an older topic that came back to the surface of bar-room and street corner talk. Mixed with exciting discussions of the relative merits of Henry Clay and James K. Polk, he heard mention of Mark Bonamy's affair, and of the curious action of his wife in forgiving her husband and adopting his child. He heard with curiosity, but with something of the jealousy a novelist is supposed to feel when his rival's book is in everybody's hand, the conjectures about Bonamy's return, the story of his flight, the guess that he was at work on the deck of a steamboat.

"What kind of a 'pearin' feller was this yer Bonnermy?" he asked, one day.

Mark was described.

"He wont never come back," said Bob, with a melancholy air and an oracular mysteriousness.

"Why?"

"He was on the 'Red Rock' when she busted,—that very feller. Told me all about things that very day. Comin' home to look about, he said. Tuck deck passage to keep from bein' seed by old friends."

This story, told over and over and commented on by different hearers, became more and more particular and circumstantial. The description of Mark grew more explicit and unmistakable.

The story came to Lathers's ears, and, with his innate love of mischief, he went to Barlow. There was property at stake, and Barlow was not insensible to property. Mark had no will, and neither Roxy nor her adopted

child could inherit of the estate, beyond what was Roxy's "dower right." The matter was quite worth looking into.

Roxy, on her part, was alarmed by the story as she heard it. She went to see Bob, and the poor fellow, who was a kind-hearted liar, admitted to her various doubts that he had, as to whether the man "moughtn't be somebody else." Whittaker went to see the man, and cross-questioned him until the imaginative fellow was somewhat disconcerted "in what he called his mind," and made several amendments and adjustments in his story. But, notwithstanding Whittaker's unbelief and Roxy's own skepticism, she was in greater and greater uneasiness about Mark, as the time went on and she had no further intelligence.

Lathers had many private talks with Olcott, and under the sheriff's instruction he became more guarded, and his story became perceptibly less inconsistent with itself. Lathers paid his board for a week in order to retain him in the village, and Olcott thought it about the easiest run he had ever had in his life.

One evening Major Lathers had a long interview with the roustabout. Then, as he drank with Olcott at the bar, he said to the landlord: "Barlow'll apply fer letters of administration on that, and the jedge'll grant 'em, too."

"I don't hardly think so," said Peter Raymond, who had just come in. Raymond was an eccentric fellow, French by his father's side and Kentuckian on his mother's. He was thought to be a simpleton by strangers, but those who knew him better considered him more of a wit.

"Why wont he?" responded Lathers, with a knowing twinkle in his eyes.

"Well, your evidence is mighty slim, it 'pears like, and then Mrs. Bonamy's got the best lawyer in the country on her side," answered Pete.

"We know what the evidence is better'n you do, and ez fer lawyer, I'd like to see you muster a better than Barlow."

"Well, she's done it. He come up on the mail-boat jest this minute, and has gone straight to her house."

"Joe Marshall of Madison, I suppose," said Lathers, with a look of despondency. "He's an all-fired speaker, but he's lazy, and he wont work up the case like Barlow."

"'Taint Joe Marshall, neither," said Pete. "It's a long sight better man than him."

"Who in thunder is it?"

"Oh, it's Mark Bonamy himself! He was dressed rough, like a deck-hand, and in the dusk didn't nobody on the w'arf-boat see him. He jest jumped off away aft, and crossed the lower end of the w'arf. I happened to meet him as he was goin' up the bank, and I says: 'Go to thunder, Mark Bonamy!' says I. 'I'm that glad to see you!' An' he says, 'Hello, Pete! Is that you? How's my wife?' An' I says, 'All well, last I heerd,' says I. An' he never hardly stopped, but went catacornered acrost Slabtown, steerin' straight fer home, and walkin' a blue streak, like. Now I don't know what you think Major, but, in a case like this 'ere, in which he takes a interest, I'll put Bonamy ag'in all the Barlows you can git. Mrs. Bonamy's —— "

"Got high and low, Jack and the game," said the Major, striding out of the door into the fresh air, and saying, "Well! that beats *me*."

Bob Olcott's easy run came to a sudden termination at the end of the week. No longer able to live as a novelist, he had to carry coffee-sacks and roll whisky-barrels once more. He is not the only man in the profession who has failed from overdoing things.

CHAPTER LVIII.

JIM AND NANCY.

On the evening preceding this conversation in the bar-room, and the report of the return of Mark, Roxy had had a visitor. She had agreed to give Nancy Kirtley enough money to carry her to some distant country, and to "set her up" when she got there. For Nancy was resolved to have nothing more to do with Rocky Fork. She had come by appointment now to conclude the matter with Roxy. She had a dim, half-human sense of the immense goodness of Roxy—such a sense as prompts a dog to caress the bountiful hand of his master.

"Jim and me was married to-day," said Nancy, with a little exultation. "Jim's a good feller to come back to me after all, now, haint he?"

"Yes, he is. You must be good to Jim."

"Lawzy! It haint in me. I can't help bein' a leetle bad, ye know."

Roxy settled her account with Nancy, giving her what was a large amount of money for that time.

"It'll buy Jim a farm, out in Missouri, and a hoss, and two cows, and may be more," said Nance, as she prepared to go.

On the steps she stopped, looked down, and hesitated a minute.

"They's one thing more," she said.

"What's that?"

"The leetle feller. If you'd jest as lieve, I'd kinder like to take one last look at him afore I go. He's yourn now, but somehow I'm his own nat'ral mother. Ef you'd jest as lieve."

"Yes," said Roxy, reluctantly, and with a feeling of jealousy.

When Nancy saw the child, she said:

"Well, now! you have fixed him up, haint you! An' he's so purty. But then he'll never know nothin' about his own flesh and blood mother. I sha'n't trouble him. It's better he's yourn. But,"—here she wiped her eyes,—"but when he gits to be a gentleman and all, he'll never know 'at he's got another mother." She stooped and kissed the baby. Then she went out to the door, and when she parted with Roxy, she seized her hand saying: "You're awful good. You're awful good. I 'low they haint no more sich as you."

That night, she and Jim McGowan took boat for the Missouri River. They were absorbed into the community of Pikes, and Rocky Fork knew them no more.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE PRODIGAL.

One can never have done admiring the beauties of a late afternoon on the Ohio. In a village like Luzerne, where every house was bowered in apple-trees, and rose-bushes, and grape-vines, and honeysuckles, it was always a delight. That is a lazy climate, and a town like Luzerne is a place, in which half the people seem, to a stranger, to have nothing much to do. At some seasons of the year, when onion buying and hay shipping were active, the town had some appearance of life; but it was never so peaceful and sleepy-looking as about the first of August. In mid-afternoon, the clerks in the stores sprinkled the floors to keep them cool, and then sat themselves down on shoe-boxes or counters to loaf away the hot and idle time, rising with reluctance to sell a half pound of eightpenny nails to some unlucky villager, into whose garden an industrious hog had forced his way, and who was obliged to exert himself enough to nail on a few palings. The roses have long since ceased blooming. The red seed-vessels look bright among the green leaves of the rose-trees. One can hear everywhere, on such a day, the voices of the red-bird and the twittering of the martins and the chatter of chimney-swifts. The grapes are hardly reddening yet, but you can hear at this season the thud of the ripe summer apples, as they fall from time to time upon the ground. Nobody does anything. The boys find it too warm to play. They

are up in the apple-trees, filling their hats and shirt-bosoms with the too abundant fruit, or they are prowling about some garden-patch, waiting their opportunity to "hook" a great ripe water-melon. They know a good place in some retired orchard, or under a drift-pile of the river-side, where they can carry their booty, and find out how sweet are stolen melons. A little later, when the rays of the sun are less fiery, the whole village full of boys will be swimming in the tepid river, shouting, diving, splashing one another, for hours at a stretch.

It is a beautiful climate on this beautiful river, where the winters are never stern, and where, in the hot summer, one is absolved from responsibility and care. Nowhere is the "sweet doing nothing" sweeter than here. Lie down under a cherry-tree and sleep, stretch yourself near an open door-way and read, with the sound of cow-bells, and the far away cawing of crows, and the cackling of hens, and the scarcely heard and lazy hammering of the village smith floating to you out of an air full of stillness and peace. Put away your book at last. The world is too comfortable for exertion. The repose in the sky and in the faint breeze is too exquisite. It is happiness enough to be.

It does not matter that you come of an energetic race cradled in the rocky hill-sides of New England. This air is too much for you. Why be ambitious? The poorest man is rich enough here. Sit down, sad soul, or lie down and slumber.

Even a conscientious, energetic, studious Yale man such as Whittaker, cannot quite resist this enervating air of Southern Indiana. The river is so beautiful, reflecting the blue sky and the banks of white clouds, and the air is so refreshing that Whittaker does not study much. His

dictionaries are all unopened. He needs rest, he says, and he rests. All the hot afternoon he sits on the upper back porch and talks with Twonnet. There is something so stimulant in her droll speeches, that he has forgotten to study. He is trying to prepare her to be a minister's wife. Sometimes a suspicion crosses his mind that after all she has more tact and practical wisdom than he has. But for the most part he flatters himself that he is teaching her and she amuses herself as she always has done by making sport of her teacher.

"I think it would be a good plan for us to correct each other's speech, my dear, don't you?" he said to Twonnet one afternoon.

"I think it would be right good to be corrected by you," answered Twonnet.

"You oughtn't to use the word *right* instead of *very* or *quite*," Whittaker began. "All Western * people do. They say, 'It's a right cold day,' 'He's a right good man.' This is improper."

"It's in the Bible," answered Twonnet, roguishly. "I think I remember the expression, 'and that right early.'"

It had never occurred to Whittaker that these provincialisms were archaic forms—no one had given attention to the fact then. But Twonnet's reply confused him. He assured her, however, that it was hardly proper English nowadays, if it was in the Bible.

"It's right strange it should be there—I mean it's mighty strange it should be there," she said.

"Yes, it is. Another thing that is bad in Western speech is that you will say *mighty* for *very*. 'It's *mighty* good,' and 'I'm *mighty* cold' sound very rough."

---

* This is not true of the northern belt of the West, in which New England usage predominates.

"I suppose they wouldn't be rough if you were used to them," rejoined Twonnet, with mischief in her eyes "I'm *mighty* sure they wouldn't."

"Why, yes, they *are* rough in themselves."

"Yes, but you don't think the same expression rough in French. We often say *fort* for very in French."

"That is so," said Whittaker, thrown into confusion by this analogy. He had to fall back on good usage in the English language as the only authority. Then he begged Twonnet to point out any mistakes of his own.

"W'y," said she, "all of you people from the East will pronounce 'wholly' as though it were not sounded just like 'holy.'"

Whittaker could not admit that the two words were the same. All the Yale professors softened the "o" in wholly. It was only when he conquered his indolence enough to get the dictionary and when the dictionary had shown him that this "o" was not the French "cough sound," that he began to suspect that he himself had a local dialect. For no man measures his own distance from the standard. But he did not care to what result these debates came. They made talk between him and Twonnet. And if she could not learn much from books the paradoxical young woman was a very keen observer of life.

When at last supper is over, Whittaker remembers how much Roxy is in trouble, and as it is a call that is better made in company he gets Twonnet's sun-bonnet and puts it on her head, as they walk together along the river bank. Whittaker is like a man in a trance. Life has become genial and joyous to him.

The slender Bobo, who lives with Roxy all the time, now, is at the gate, and he is always glad to see them. He goes down to the gate every evening. For Roxy has taught

him to say in his prayers every night and morning: "O God, send Mark home to Roxy again." She believes superstitiously that the prayers of children and innocents have a peculiar efficacy. And Bobo, in his unquestioning faith, is quite disappointed when evening after evening he waits at the gate and finds no answer to his request.

Just now he skips along in front of Whittaker and Twonnet, for he knows that their coming will bring some cheer to the anxious face of his madonna.

And, indeed, the assurance with which Whittaker spoke of Mark's return did cheer Roxy a little that evening. The air was too balmy for anybody to believe in catastrophe. The happiness of Whittaker and Twonnet, too, was somehow infectious.

When the darkness deepened, and the mail-boat, with its two tall chimneys flying banners of fiery sparks, came in sight, Roxy got up and strained her eyes at the boat as it passed. The whizzing plash of its paddlewheels in the water, and the glare of its furnace fires on the smooth river, set her heart beating wildly. Not a boat had passed in a month that she had not gazed at it, in this eager fashion. For, though doing was easy to her, waiting was hard. The boat rounded to the wharf, and she sat down again, hoping against hope that this would be the night on which Mark should come back.

And indeed Mark Bonamy was standing just forward of the wheel-house on the lower deck of the boat, straining his eyes at the brick house, and wondering and wondering. Some weeks before, in New Orleans, as he was helping to carry a grindstone aboard on a hand-barrow, he was thinking of home and debating whether he should not return. His severe physical fatigue had brought health to his brain,

and the old lingering impression that he was to serve out a given time, had grown faint.

"Ees it you, Mr. Bonamy?" spoke up Chauvier, a French merchant, who had passed one or two summers in Luzerne. "Ze lettares I haf had from Madame Bonamy about you!"

"From what?"

"From Madame, your wife."

"My wife is dead."

"I do not like to tell you dat you do not speak de trute, but pardi, Madame has recovered herself, and she wants very much to zee you."

"Get to work, there! None of your foolin'!" called out the mate to Mark.

"I guess I wont work any more," said Mark, putting down his end of the barrow.

"You wont, eh?" And the mate bristled up to him. The only means of discipline among the deck crew of that day, was the brutal blow with the mate's fist armed with metal knuckles. But when Mark, irritated by all he had borne, and all the oppressions he had seen put on weaker men, squared himself off, the mate, noting his size, and remembering that he might get in the first blow, contented himself with saying:

"You wont get any pay for the time you've worked over your month."

To this Bonamy made no reply, but pursued his wondering inquiries. Guided by Chauvier's information, he found Luzerne people about the levee, who confirmed the Frenchman's intelligence.

That night he started home, taking deck passage to avoid observation. With every mile that the slow-paced boat traveled, he became more and more impatient. At Louis-

ville he changed to the mail-boat. Hardly had the "Ben Franklin No. 2" touched the wharf, when he leaped upon the lower end of the wharf-boat, where there were no people, and ran across, jumping ashore. He met Pete Raymond on the bank, and then took the near and lonesome cut across the grassy common of the lower terrace.

When he arrived at his own gate, in his tatterdemalion costume of deck-hand, he was kept back by hearing voices on the porch. He could not go in while strangers were there.

So it happened that, when time enough had elapsed for Mark to have reached home and he came not, Roxy gave up, saying:

"Well, Bobo, Mark didn't come this time, did he?"

And it seemed to her that he would never come.

When Whittaker and Twonnet passed out of the gate, Mark recognized them, but he concealed himself until they had gone. Then he approached the gate where Bobo had stopped when he had accompanied Whittaker and Twonnet thus far. The lad was gazing through the palings and wondering why God did not tell Mark to come home.

"Is that you, Bobo?" said Mark, gently.

Recognizing the voice, Bobo gave a great cry of delight and ran wildly into the house.

"Mark's come back to Roxy!" he cried.

Mark had walked up under the old poplars, trembling with he knew not what emotion, until he was half-way to the house, when he saw Roxy coming toward him.

He stopped there, ashamed, for the first time, of his appearance, and in some strange trepidation about the reception he would have.

Roxy could not recognize him in the darkness. She paused, and then said, interrogatively:

THE NEXT SUNDAY, SHE TOOK HER OLD PLACE IN THE METHODIST MEETING HOUSE.

"Mark?"

"Yes, Roxy!"

Mark had not long to doubt of his welcome then. What were soiled and ragged clothes or bitter and guilty memories? He was at home, forgiven, kissed, embraced, wept over, loved as of old. When Roxy had embraced him over and over, and wept upon his neck, she led him into the house in triumph. She had conquered at last.

The next Sunday, she took her old place in the Methodist meeting-house. Mark stayed at home, because Roxy did not like to have him subjected to any humiliation from the looks or words of those about him. But she sat again in the amen corner, among the sisters who were active in the church. There was the old look of gladness in her face. There was more than the old gladness, now, in her heart—there was blessedness. It was the quarterly meeting, and when the venerable elder read with emotion, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled," tears of joy were in her eyes, and a fullness as of God, in her heart. And when he read, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy," many in the congregation turned their eyes toward her. But when the white-haired old man read, "Blessed are the peacemakers," his voice quivered, and he involuntarily looked at Roxy; then he slowly finished: "for they shall be called the children of God." Every word dropped like a benediction into her heart. She bowed her head upon the back of the seat in front of her and wept, while sighs and sobs were heard from the demonstrative people all over the house. And of all who knelt by the rude benches in that old church that day to eat and drink the blessed bread and wine, there were none who took the secret sacrament as did the woman who had dared to give

her heart to suffer for others, after the pattern of the Master of self-sacrifice.

The people said that Roxy was her old self again. But she was not. A great experience transforms. We must ever be more or less than our old selves. Roxy was not now the zealous and restless young woman seeking a mission, and longing for hard tasks. Her work was in her hands, and she was easily master of it. The victory of paradise was already in her heart, for she had overcome the world's tribulation.

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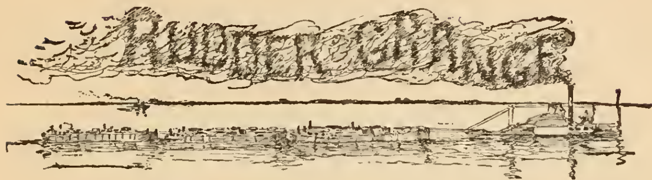

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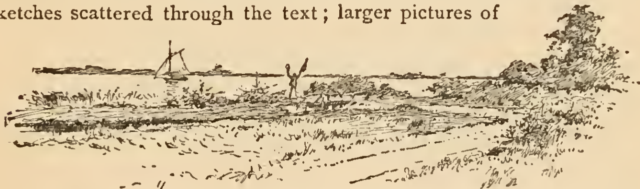

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